CHRIST IN WORD AND WORK

MARTYN SUMMERBELL

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Christ in Word *and* Work

BY

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Home Training", etc.

The Antioch Press
Dayton, Ohio
1920

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JUN -1 1920

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FOREWORD

IN the preparation of this modest book on "Christ in Word and Work" some thought has been had of the young Christian, and of the young preacher also, as they undertake their consecrated work for the Master. No claim is made for a complete portraiture of that wonderful life, which is still the inspiration and hope of the world. Some effort has been made to clear away misconceptions of the truth and to point out special relations that bear upon the Christian life of this age. If some heart is induced to study the Christ more deeply and to enter upon His work with more loyal devotion, the writer's aim will have been accomplished.

THE AUTHOR.

Lakemont, New York, August 11, 1919.

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PREMONITIONS OF THE ADVENT

I.

PREMONITIONS OF THE ADVENT

IT is doubtful if our age has the right estimate of the moral and intellectual darkness which beclouded the ancient world. From the cradle we have enjoyed the blessing of the Christian faith. Its glorious truths have been our meat and drink from our earliest recollection, so that we have been living in the consciousness of the divine protection and love, in an atmosphere charged with Gospel truth and honor, which has given a high standard for all human relationships; and in a firm assurance of the immortal life, so that it is difficult for us to conceive that others have ever been denied these splendid privileges.

But whoever reads the chronicles and the dramatic and other literature which was current in the period of the Caesars, provided he has not read it with his eyes closed, will perceive that whatever religious trust might have existed previously, it was either dead or was about to expire. The gods of the fathers were discredited in every city, their priests were either lampooned openly or secretly derided, and their temples everywhere were falling into neglect. Far and wide the leaders of thought were becoming atheistical, denying outright that any god was ruling in the world, or else standing passively aloof from religious obligations. When they happened to participate in

some religious ceremonial, it was in the pose of languid concession to popular tradition, or of compliance with a social usage which it would be impolitic to disregard; although as a source of spiritual improvement they gave it no confidence whatever. That was a sad world indeed, the world of Athens, Alexandria, and Rome; a world in which human passions ran riot and void of any competent restraint; a world from which the trust of man in his brother had perished; a world which offered no real security, and nothing which could arouse a hearty desire for any hereafter.

Amid this universal darkness which prevailed throughout the pagan nations, the only light that appeared up to the coming of Jesus was presented in the religion of the Jews. The Hebrew race possessed a revelation of the True God, given through the patriarchs and prophets. Their temple crowned the slopes of Zion, standing there as a memorial of the one Living and True God, and of His watchful providence over His children.

But when we examine the religion of the Jew in this period, we find that it had suffered a serious lapse from the force and purity which it displayed in a former day. Its history proved that it had a sure foundation in the original divine revelation, and it still held in jealous veneration the Holy Books that had been passed on through the generations. But far from holding faithful to its past record, it had degenerated from a living faith to a careless conformity to custom; and its ceremonies were become less the expression of a conscious dependence on God, than the punctilious observance of an ornate ritual. Examples there

still were of pious devotion, such as one observes in Mary, the bride of Joseph; in Zacharias and Elizabeth; and in the holy Simeon who ministered at the altar: but taking the Jewish people as a whole, religiously speaking, they were on the worldly plane; worshipping like saints in synagogue and temple on the Holy Days, but conducting themselves for the rest of the week like ordinary sinners, so that their religion in effect was a pretentious sham. How deplorable their state we may learn from the reproof of Jesus, when He said, *"Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me."* (Matt. 15:8). And yet, because they possessed some remnant of religious feeling, and owned a history that was fragrant with real devotion, the Gospel was delivered first to Israel, and so through the Chosen People to the great world without. Peter addressed the first of his epistles to the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia: that is, to the Jews of the Dispersion; and his second epistle was dedicated to the same hearers, some of whom, so he says, had already "attained like precious faith with us:" and it was these same Jews, now become Christians, whom he was seeking to confirm in the faith.

How was it possible to bring Jews in that first century, men full of pride in their ancient lineage and in the law which they had received through Moses, to acceptance of this new Gospel? All their training was opposed to the new teaching,

all their prejudices inclined them to hold fast to the old worship, and besides that they knew well the hatred their chief priests and rabbis had nursed against Jesus, and how their mad rage had compassed His death upon the cross. But Peter supplied the bridge that connected the Law and the Gospel. It was the same which he presented to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, when he declared to them that the Jesus whom they had crucified was the veritable Messiah, for whom every Jewish household had been so long in anxious expectation. In the first chapter of his second epistle he opens up for them a page from his personal experience. He recalls for their benefit that remarkable interview with Jesus on the mountain, when he in company with James and John had seen the Lord transfigured; when the countenance and even the raiment of the Master were all aglow from the outshining of His divinity; and when Moses and Elijah, who had come from the heavenly world, conversed with the Lord familiarly concerning the things that shortly must come to pass.

This incident, which connected these ancient worthies with Jesus, their interest in Jesus, of Moses the Lawgiver and Elijah the chief of the older prophets, constituted a living tie between the past and the present; a confirmation of Christ's divine power and mission so definite and so circumstantial, that the more sincere a Jew might be, the more certainly he would be forced to accept the testimony.

But, beside the reference to this striking incident, Peter strengthens his position by calling

attention to premonitions of the advent which appear in the Old Testament Scriptures. These he groups together under the expression, "a more sure word of prophecy." Though a conscientious Jew might hesitate to accept Peter's personal witness, how could he object when he listens to his own prophets prophesying of Jesus, and the life and character of Jesus fulfil all the conditions of the prophecy? The concurrence of these ancient premonitions, of the long standing and well authenticated predictions, with the actual career of Christ was the highest evidence that could be presented to an intelligent mind, and because they had accepted that evidence, thousands of Jews had yielded to the truth and had enlisted with the followers of Jesus.

If the premonitions of the Advent, which occur in the Old Testament, were effective in winning disciples and so establishing them in the truth in that first century, they should be useful in our own day in fortifying our conceptions of God's workings with His people, and in enabling us to realize the rank and glory of our Redeemer.

For it is possible for one to study Christ in His historical character, as the babe, the boy, the teacher, the helper, and the martyr, and by confining thought to these external relations to lose much of the real Christ, and of the blessing which the completer faith will confer. It is only when we open the Scriptures and find that they carry this Christ story far back to "the beginning," and from that immeasurable distance that they open up page after page of allusion to the Coming One, that we begin to apprehend the breadth of the

divine purpose in revelation; or, as it has been so aptly called, "the scarlet thread" of the testimony of Jesus, which runs on through prophecy after prophecy, age after age, and establishes our trust in the divine message and the divine Messenger.

In all our speech of prophecy it is to be remembered, however, that the principal office of the prophet was that of preacher and teacher, and that the prophetical books in the main are devoted to religious instruction. Samuel was a prophet of the prophets, and the head of a great school of the prophets at Ramah. The names of his pupils are forgotten, but they bore a leading part in the religious instruction of Israel. When we trace the course of such teachers as Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, who stand in the forefront of the prophets, we remark that their special function was to warn the king and the nation in the hour of national peril, and admonish them to turn from their backslidings and call upon the name of the Lord. They reproved the people for their vanities and sins, and pleaded with them to observe the Law and the duty of worship. As we peruse these prophetical books we are led to admire the unflinching courage of these old-time preachers, who would not hold their peace, and who risked their all while they exhorted their hearers to hearken unto God.

A secondary office of the prophet, but incidental to that of preaching and teaching, was the prediction of future events. Scattered here and there all through the Old Testament, embedded sometimes in some historical narrative, or introduced into the body of a fervent appeal, there occur

special promises of protection for the Chosen People, or declarations of disaster to their enemies, or predictions of a Savior whom God was to send forth in the fulness of the times, or of the final triumph of righteousness; so that the whole world should become subject to the gentle rule of the Prince Immanuel.

It was this class of premonitions, of predictive prophecy, to which Peter cites the attention of his readers, and which he terms "a more sure word of prophecy," and which in the Church was to be like *"a light that shineth in a dark place."*

Such premonitions, such predictive prophecy, served in part as an assurance of the abiding and never failing providence of God in the care of his people. Promises of this kind were given to Abraham, and were repeated to Isaac and Jacob, who were told that they were to occupy and hold the Land of Promise from generation to generation. In all their wanderings from the Far East to Palestine, and from Palestine to Egypt and back again, they had the sustaining comfort of that pledge, and the fair prospect of a settled habitation in their home land, where they could dwell securely under their own vine and fig tree.

Later, when the nation was facing the peril of Egypt and Babylon, and later still when they were bemoaning their captivity in a strange land, they were supported in their affliction by the pledge that the Lord would turn the captivity of Zion.

An important function of these Biblical premonitions, of these predictive prophecies, was their witness to the truth of divine revelation. We have a strong appeal to the truth of the divine

Word, an appeal to which we assign a high valuation, in the moral excellence of the message which came to the world through the patriarchs and the prophets. In this respect the Bible stands alone and unparalleled. In other Sacred Books, so-called, we find frequently recurring examples of weakness and triviality, but the Bible maintains a consistent sublimity of tone; and while the others frequently descend to palliations and justifications for immorality and sin, the Bible from cover to cover upholds the highest standard of truth and goodness. Blessed be that Holy Book, whose precepts we revere, and whose winsome invitations inspire us to noblest effort.

"How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration given.
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine
To guide our souls to Heaven."

But the exalted moral appeal of the Bible has the limitation that its most effective appeal reaches only those who are already in sympathy with an exalted morality, and whose souls respond quickly to spiritual influences. To reach the many who are weak in moral cultivation the approach must be made from a different angle. Here enters the advantage of predictive prophecy in that it makes its approach to the intellect, and so can the better reach and convince the average man. Make it clear to him that the Bible offers definite statements as to men and events that are to have their day in some far off future, and then show him that such persons have lived, and such events have occurred in strict fulfilment of the prediction, and

he cannot escape the conviction that premonitions of that class are of divine origin, and that they constitute a part of the divine revelation. In fact, if he has the logical mind, that will follow sound reason to its conclusions, he will see that such premonitions support and confirm the claim for the divine origin of the entire revelation; of the predictions themselves, and the historical writings, and the prophetical writings of which they form a substantial and an essential part.

But some have made the claim that prophetical predictions—those of the Old Testament, and all others that make similar pretense—are not to be trusted, since in the word of Scripture, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world." And it is lamentably true that there have been many deceivers, and many pretenders to foretelling future events. Some such are mentioned in the Old Testament history. And among the heathen such pretenders were numerous, some of whom had a great vogue among the people. Their oracles were enshrined in vast temples, whose corridors were crowded with the votive offerings of their deluded believers. Such came to consult the oracle as to the possible recovery of the sick, as to the outcome of their commercial ventures, and as to whether their military expeditions would be crowned with victory, or be shamed by defeat. It was the common practice with their priests to put forth their oracular utterances in such ambiguous phrase as would fit either event, life or death, success or failure, victory or disaster; so that whatever the outcome the honor and veracity of the shrine would be sustained.

Because of such fraudulent pretensions there is good reason for applying an adequate test to all professed prophetical utterances, whether of the Scripture or other, and any such which really proceed from a divine source should respond to three crucial conditions:

1. They will concern persons, matters, or events that are of vital moment.
2. They will be definite and circumstantial.
3. They will be of a nature such as to be beyond the reach of human capacity to make accurate forecast.

It has been said that real prophetical predictions will concern persons, matters, or events that are of vital moment. It is not to be imagined that Divinity will occupy itself with inanities and trivialities. There was occasion for the prophet to predict the rise of a Cyrus, who was to make possible the rebuilding of the Temple; or to predict the overthrow of hostile cities, or the dispersion of Israel in the Gentile nations.

And divine predictions may be expected to be definite and circumstantial, so that when they were fulfilled the fact could be verified beyond contradiction. Divinity has no need for veiling its utterances in obscurity. The prophet himself at the time of his announcement might not realize the full import of his message, but when the fulfilment arrived the matching of fact with forecast would be so complete as to make assurance doubly sure.

And divine predictions are expected to be of a nature quite past the range of the conjectures of human judgment.

While Louis XVI. was still on the French throne Edmund Burke in the British House of Commons declared that there was prospect of a revolution across the Channel. His judgment was justified when the mob tore down the Bastile and sent the king to the guillotine. And so before our American Civil War Arthur Helps wrote his book, "The Impending Crisis," in which he advised that a struggle was impending between the advocates of human slavery on the one side and the friend of freedom on the other. And in 1911 Lord Roberts predicted that Germany was plotting a war against England and English interests, for which he was ridiculed by men high in authority right and left. In all these notable instances, however, though the events predicted were still in the future, they were of the kind that follow in the natural course of affairs under causes, which might slip the average mind, but which statesmen who are accustomed to weigh causes and effects would notice to their inevitable conclusion. A really divine prediction would not rely upon possibilities so evident as these, but would forecast results which would lie outside the realm of human reasoning or conjecture.

These three several tests are met completely in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Consider the predictions respecting the family of Abraham, to which reference has been made. That family was to possess the land of Palestine, and it was to increase till its numbers became like the leaves of the forest for multitude, or like the waves of the sea. Now Abraham had but the two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac had but two sons, Jacob and

Esau. Jacob had twelve sons, and when he traveled to Egypt there were altogether seventy souls in his caravan, counting the children, servants, and herdsmen. What natural expectation could there have been that this particular seventy, facing the vicissitudes of famine, of the desert journey, of attack by robbers on the way, and of sojourn in a strange land, could live and expand to become a great multitude? Why should they not have been lost, as the brook is lost that flows into the thirsty sand of the wilderness? And yet Israel has survived, and still survives; though ten of its twelve tribes were lost so that no man knoweth of them to this day; and the Jew continues on, scattered all over the globe, and his race is possibly the most numerous of any that traces its origin to a single head. In this instance the predictions of the Scripture have been fulfilled definitely and circumstantially.

Then we have the prophecies concerning Babylon. At the time when Jeremiah raised his lament over Babylon that proud city was the capital of the mightiest of the world empires. Her armies were marching from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and even to the borders of Egypt. Her commerce covered the whole East. Her walls were lofty, some three hundred feet in height, and within them she could assemble her armies and withstand a siege of years. And yet while Babylon stood thus as the queen city of the Euphrates, and when to all human appearance she would probably hold her dominion to the end of time, Jeremiah declared that her glory must fade, that an assembly of nations should come out of the north,

(50: 9), that her defenders should become as cowardly as women, (50: 30), that the river which was her defence should be dried up, (51: 36), that their drunkenness and revellings should cause them to sleep a perpetual sleep, (51: 39), that armed men should throng her streets like caterpillars, (51: 14), and that as a result Babylon should become as heaps, a dwelling place for dragons. (51: 37).

All that circumstantial fate befel the doomed city exactly as it was foretold. Cyrus came down from the Persian mountains with his host drawn from many tribes. His armies surrounded the city. He cut a canal for the Euphrates outside the city wall. One night while Belshazzar and his great lords were besotted in drunken carousal, he turned aside the river into its new channel, and marched his soldiers in the old bed of the stream under the massive gates of bronze, till in a few hours he was master of the impregnable capital. Belshazzar was slain and his empire passed to the Medes and Persians. Later still Alexander the Great defeated Darius the Persian, and presently Babylon passed altogether. Her trade was diverted to other routes. The sun-dried bricks of her walls and palaces were dissolved by the elements, and walls, hanging gardens, and palaces became heaps in the desert, till in the Middle Age there was not a remnant of all her proud edifices remaining above ground, so that doubts were current as to any such city ever having been in existence. Only within our own time has the spade of the archeologist unearthed the ruins and established the certainty of Jeremiah's prophetic forecast. And

that prediction was made two hundred years before Cyrus was born.

The instance of Egypt parallels that of Babylon. Once Egypt was omnipotent in the ancient world, the richest empire, the mightiest, and boasted the most advanced civilization. The ruins of her magnificent palaces and temples, and her vast pyramids which still stand among the world wonders, testify with eloquent voice of the reality of her greatness. While she was still in the height of her glory the prophet Ezekiel prophesied against her that, "*Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more among the nations.*" (29:15). And Egypt fell from her high estate. Her prosperity was broken. Greek, Roman, and Saracen in succession seized upon her dominion, and to this hour through more than twenty-four centuries, not a native prince of Egyptian lineage has held her sceptre. So this moment she is in the enjoyment of her most prosperous season for centuries, and she has this blessing as a dependency of the British Empire.

Then, too, we may remember Tyre. Tyre was a city of Phoenicia, and was great when Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. One of her kings was an intimate friend of Solomon. She manufactured the finest of cloths, made the richest dyes, and wrought fine metal work, and glass and other products, which she sent in her ships all through the Mediterranean, and even to Britain. But in the midst of her prosperity Ezekiel lifted up his voice against her and prophesied that she should become like the top of a rock, a place for the spreading of nets. (26:14). And

precisely that has become the fate of Tyre. She suffered repeated attacks from other nations. Again and again her homes and palaces were destroyed by seize and fire. At last her industrial skill was forgotten. Her shipping rotted at her wharves. All her storied prosperity faded like a feverish dream. Such a fate was deemed impossible by the generation that heard the prophet's word, and they scoffed at him as if he were demented, but time has fulfilled his prediction to the letter.

Prophecies of this class partake of the nature of the miracle. They are voices from the unseen world. They demonstrate the providential care of God and His omniscient power, whereby He sees the end from the beginning.

But the prophecies to which Peter especially refers, and which are *"like the light that shineth in a dark place,"* are those which proclaim the coming of Messiah, the Christ. All the way from Genesis to Malachi there are found premonitions of His coming, and they were so definite and circumstantial that in the time of Augustus the entire race of the Jews was in the attitude of eager expectation of their deliverer.

As we read these Messianic predictions which foretell His race, the time of the Advent, the town Bethlehem in which He was to be born, the service He was to render to the world, the rejection He should suffer from His own people, the price for which He was to be sold, the lots that were to be cast for His vesture, the making His grave with the rich, His resurrection from the dead, and the ingathering of the Gentiles, we are impelled to the

conviction that the prophecy reads like the history, and that the history matches the prophecy.

We are not to wonder then, when Jesus after the resurrection went walking toward Emmaus and consorted with Luke and Cleopas, who failed to recognize Him, that *"beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."* (Luke 24:27).

Nor need we feel surprise that Stephen, the eloquent deacon, made excellent use of the prophecies with the men in the Asiatic synagogues, so that *"they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."* (Acts 6:10).

And there was that African treasurer, who was riding in his chariot on his way to far distant home, and lightened the tediousness of the journey by reading out of the Book of Isaiah that passage of the suffering Savior, and who asked Philip to explain to him the Scripture. Of this we are told that *"Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."* (Acts 8:35).

Time and again in recent years these prophecies have been helpful in refuting the objections of the unbeliever and bringing converts to the Savior. In our modern church we may be thankful to God for giving us the New Testament, with its beautiful gospel stories of Jesus and His mission, and with them the rest of the Book, which serves to elaborate and explain the main story.

But if we are to be really wise in the faith we shall not confine our reading to the later Scriptures alone. For in the Old Testament we shall

find broad fields awaiting investigation, which will enlarge our understanding of God's dealing with His people; and among the richest of our finds, which will give us the clearer vision of our Lord, we will place the *"more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts."* (2 Peter 1:19).

THE COVENANT BEARER

II.

THE COVENANT BEARER

JESUS is the problem of the ages, of our own age no less than of those that have gone before, and He will be the problem of the ages that follow us. This is so primarily because finiteness cannot comprehend infinity, and also because the most of men fix their minds upon single traits of His nature and so miss the breadth of His being. The Jewish nation failed conspicuously in this respect. He was their long-expected messenger, but when He came, message in hand, they turned Him aside, because they saw Him as the Nazarene, that and no more. And so they scouted and derided Him. They were all astray as respects His origin, His person, and His mission, and so they flouted the one person of their race who has given it its highest glory.

Pilate, the Roman governor, before whom Jesus was haled, estimated Him as a prisoner whom malice was accusing. As a magistrate he was inclined to befriend Him up to the point where His own political aspirations were involved, and then he sacrificed his prisoner without a scruple. Pilate's wife was wiser than her husband, and warned him to have nothing to do with "that just man." She recognized the saintliness of Jesus, but past that her vision halted. And it will be the same with any one who surveys Jesus in any one

of His numerous offices and confines thought to that. So some acknowledge Him as Master. That He was, for He was teacher to His disciples all through His ministry on earth. But while He was the Master then, he was also much more. Let Him be applauded as the Reformer. And He was that also, but to regard Him merely as the Reformer is to miss consciousness of the real Christ. Suppose Him to be viewed as the Miracle Worker, or a chief of the Martyrs. But the whole Christ is not to be reckoned as summed up in any one of these characters. It is only as we study Him as He is revealed in the Scripture, in the prophecies, in the history, and in the combination of all these representations, that we can begin to realize anything of His actual power and majesty or anything of His unrivalled glory as the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

One aspect of the Savior, which requires early attention, is His office of Covenant Bearer, which is mentioned in Malachi, who was the last of the Old Testament preachers. Of this the prophet speaks, Chapter 3, verse 1, saying, *"Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."* This language suggests the lapse of the Old Covenant and the substitution of one that is new and an improvement on the other that has fallen out by the way.

In the early days God had instituted a Covenant with His servant Noah, when He showed him the rainbow in the heavens and gave him the

pledge, while the earth remained that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, and cold and heat should not cease.

Later on God called Abram out of Chaldea and made another Covenant with him and his seed after him. He was the Friend of God, faithful and tried, and God was friend to him and his house. This Abrahamic Covenant was renewed with Isaac and Jacob, and then again was renewed in splendid detail and formal ceremonies with SIx—S B
Moses and the people of Israel, after their exodus from Egypt. Under the terms of this Covenant God was to be the Father and Protector of Israel, and Israel was to love, serve, and worship Him.

Now a covenant in its simplest terms is an agreement, a compact, a contract, more or less formal in its nature; an engagement between two persons or interests, according to which they bargain, each with the other, to perform some substantial service. In a real covenant each of the parties to the engagement is to give, and each is to receive.

One may imagine himself a merchant and about to engage a clerk to sell goods for him over his counter. He covenants and agrees with the young man to pay him so many dollars a week, provided he works as he directs for so many hours six days in the week. This covenant may be verbal, or it may be written down in black and white, signed, sealed, and delivered, with all legal formality. But in either case it is a covenant, legal and binding both in law and morals. What gives it its binding force, as the lawyers would state it, is the

meeting of the minds of the contracting parties as to the service or obligation which each is to render to the other, and then their actually entering upon the service or obligation. The essential part is that both covenant to serve, and that both actually assume the duty or obligation as contracted for.

Under that Covenant of Abraham, which was renewed by Moses and the people of Israel, God on His part gave them a holy and spiritual faith, a noble and distinctive form of religious worship, and the assurance of His sovereign guidance and protection. For its part Israel was to cut loose from all entanglements which might corrupt the people's character or morals, to reject all service to the gods of the heathen, which were but dumb idols, and all were to conform their conduct to God's pure and holy commandment, and live a peculiar people, whose God was the Lord.

When the Chosen People who had agreed to this Covenant entered the Land of Canaan, God fulfilled for them every promise He had made. He gave victory to their armies and swept away their adversaries like chaff before the tempest. He settled their tribes on fertile tracts, where the vine and the olive and the fig tree flourished, and where their fields were a riot of fertility and abundance. He preserved them from the incursions of robbers, and under David, the king, they extended their bounds, and grew to be a great nation, feared and respected by all the nations round about. And while David still was king, he subdued for them the last great stronghold of the Canaanites, the rock Jebus, the most conspicuous elevation in the whole country south of Mt. Her-

mon, and here he sustained David, while the king built here his capital city, Jerusalem, which he adorned with his royal palace, and where he fixed upon the site for the temple which in the following reign became the crown and glory of Zion. Here it was that God extended His blessing to Solomon, the son of David, while he continued to walk in the faith of his fathers: and when Solomon erected the temple —one of the wonders of the ancient world—God consecrated it by sending the fire from heaven, which consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifice. And He further hallowed that temple by the presence of the Shekinah, that effulgent blaze, the symbol of the divine presence, which flooded the Holy of Holies and glorified the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

But although God stood faithful to the covenant, Israel was recreant. All through its extended history that nation exhibited the waywardness of a spoiled child. The more that God showered His blessings, the more the nation went astray with pettishness and frivolity. Now and then the nation served God, but soon again was in revolt against the restraints of faith and was following its own unhallowed inclinations. Because Israel had forgotten God and violated the covenant Malachi raised his voice in disapproval. They had turned their faces away from the house of the Lord. They had neglected the altar to consort with the heathen. They had failed to regard the commandments of the moral law. They had condoned the sins of the sorcerers, the adulterers, the perjurers, and those who oppressed the servant in

his wages. Even the priests had despised God's honor, in that they had accepted contemptible creatures to be offered in sacrifice, such as the blind, the lame, the sick, the torn; such creatures as were unmarketable and which under the Levitical law were debarred from the altar. In all these ways they had been committing sin and dishonoring God. And so, because of Israel's departure from duty, and because the people had forsaken God, the Most High was to declare the Old Covenant abrogated, void, and of none effect; and He was to send forth His Messenger, who was to offer mankind, and confirm with them, a new and more spiritual Covenant.

From this distance, as we survey the passing of the Old Covenant, we realize the loss which Israel was bringing upon herself. The position of the Chosen People had been one of the highest privilege. Allusion has been made to the peace and prosperity which they had enjoyed so long as they held true to their best convictions. Not only during all that period were they blessed in the increase of their flocks and herds, and in all manner of material wealth; but what was far better, they possessed the consciousness of dwelling in favor with God. This assurance of the smile of heaven made their days brighter, since it conferred a sense of security for the morrow. Still more it was a privilege to know, out of all the religions of the world, that their own was the purest and the most inspiring. Any Jew who traveled abroad into any other land, in Moab, or Phoenicia, or Egypt, found himself in an atmosphere of religious strangeness and depression. He

could see that the priests of the heathen were exploiting the people, playing upon their fears, and multiplying their superstitious observances in order to exact the more bountiful revenue. He could see that every heathen temple was a training school of iniquity, and was busily engaged in teaching deceit and trickery, and often that it was a pander to lustful vice. The conceptions of the Deity which were current among the heathen were low and debasing, and their gods were pictured as having all the passions and frailties of men. The return of the wanderer from such a journey, and his visit to the altar of God, gave him a sense of relief and of power to draw a fresh breath after his contact with ideas and opinions that were rank soul poison. The contrast was wide, for his own faith, with its God of perfect holiness, justice, and truth, drew forth the best that was in him, and inspired him to higher ideals in character and endeavor.

And he could rejoice in having the results of such a pure and inspiring faith. For it is the religion of a nation that inspires its life and sets the current of its customs and traditions. In a way religion may be taken both as a cause and effect. It is a cause in so far as it establishes standards of conduct and urges men to live up to them; and it is an effect to the extent that men will support that form of religion only which represents principles which they actually possess. Thus the worship of Moloch and of Chemosh, which the Bible denounces, tended to make men more selfish and fierce and cruel than they were by nature, and while it was doing that it was acting

as the effective cause of a development so unfortunate. And then these men, who were selfish, and fierce, and cruel, experienced a fierce and unholy pleasure in attending their frightful ceremonies, in the course of which other peoples' children, and even their own, were cast into the red hot bosom of the brazen idol. The cruel men reflected their own cruel natures in their enjoyment of a cruel worship.

But the worship of Israel, and all the precepts of its faith, tended toward the promotion of the beautiful traits of mercy and kindness, of honesty and fair dealing, characteristics which established and confirmed confidence in all social and industrial intercourse. The Ten Commandments set the ideal of conduct in all human relationships, in man's duty to God and also to his neighbor; and when these commandments were observed they produced contentment and happiness in the seclusion of the home, and outside the home they established that trust and reliance on the good faith of others which is the essential foundation of social peace and prosperity. Just so long as Israel was faithful to the Covenant, the nation had joy and comfort in its worship, and a delightful consciousness of success in trade and government, both domestic and foreign.

Wherein Israel went astray was in yielding to the social temptation. As a rule the most of the ills of the world take their start through social influence and example. It was the divine purpose in isolating the Hebrew race, in calling Abram away from Chaldea, and in bringing Israel out of Egypt and placing the people in Palestine, to free

them from the enticements growing out of intimacy with people of low pursuits and pleasures. But all the while that God was endeavoring to keep His people pure, they were working in direct opposition to the divine program. For they consorted freely with the heathen, mingled with them in banquet and festival, and continued to contract marriages between their children and those of the heathen. When it is understood that nearly all the heathen banquets were associated with their idolatrous sacrifices, it is seen that every Hebrew who attended them was in the act betraying his own worship and giving countenance to idolatry. In any case, whether he understood the significance of his course or not, such was the natural consequence. And the more that such practices prevailed, and the more that Israel consorted socially with the heathen, by just so much the more was the true religion weakened in their own hearts, and the more moral restraints were dismissed from their own lives.

But not only were the common people apostatizing from the faith in this manner, for the leaders of the nation, princes, and kings, men whose duty it was to hold the people loyal to conscience and religion, were deserters from principle and wanderers from God.

In his boyhood Solomon was God's faithful servant. When he grew older, however, he followed the lure of ambition into devious ways. He was eager to cement alliances with his neighbors, and so took to himself the daughters of their kings as his wives; and then in order to make these women contented in his capital, he built for

them gorgeous palaces, and also erected high places for them where they might worship their false gods. In this manner he surmounted three of the principal elevations of the Mount of Olives with such high places for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Moloch; and these wives of the king, and their throng of courtiers, formed a numerous and influential class in Jerusalem, all of whose habits, traditions, and customs were interwoven inextricably with heathenism, and were contrary to the law of God and the welfare of Israel.

Rehoboam, who was the son of Solomon by an Ammonitish mother, continued these abominations of his father, and surpassed him in his transgressions. As a result it was under Rehoboam that the great schism occurred, the breaking away of the ten northern tribes, and the setting up of Samaria as the capital of the Northern Kingdom. And here it was that Ahab, king of Israel, contracted marriage with Jezebel, the princess of Tyre. She built a great temple in Samaria to Baal, the false god of the Phoenicians. It was Ahab and Jezebel who made Israel to sin so abominably that the prophet Elijah came to be doubtful whether there was a man left in Israel who had not bowed the knees to Baal.

Under influences such as these, influences creeping upward from the common people, and others spreading downward from the throne, the heart of the nation was alienated from God. His altars were neglected and profaned, and there was so much wickedness abroad in the land that Malachi, God's servant, openly pronounced the lapse of the former Covenant, and its replacement by one

that was more spiritual; a new Covenant to be contracted between God and such people as were disposed to serve Him in deed and in truth.

It was some four hundred and twenty years before the Advent of Jesus, that Malachi, glancing down the perspective of the ages, predicted His coming, and described five principal points of identification by which He was to be recognized.

1. He was to be announced by a forerunner; thus, Mal. 3 : 1, *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."* The same thought recurs in Ch. 4 : 5 and 6, where it is written, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."* The idea of a herald to prepare the way for the Messiah appears in Isaiah 40 : 3, which reads with manifest allusion to John the Baptist, *"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."* So also Zacharias, the father of John, declared of him in the temple, *"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins."*

2. A second mark of the Covenant Bearer was to be the suddenness of his coming. This appears in the word, *"And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple."* (Mal. 3 : 1). The expectation of Israel for The Coming One was

long and eager. In every Jewish household the hope was cherished that the next child might be the longed-for Sent of God. Century succeeded century, and yet there was no Deliverer. When he was born, it was in Bethlehem of Judea; but He was not to tarry there, for an angel bade Joseph take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt. There He was to stay till Herod was dead and the danger from him was over-past. So it was when Jesus finally came, and was acknowledged by John at the fords of the Jordan, it was as sudden to Israel as a flash of lightning out of a clear sky.

3. A third distinguishing mark of the Covenant Bearer was to be His connection with the temple: *"and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple."* (Mal. 3:1). Now Jesus all through His ministry was associated with the temple. When He was but two weeks old He was taken to the temple, where He was blessed by the saintly Simeon, who was ready to die, now that he had seen the Lord's salvation. At the age of twelve He was in the temple, engaged in discussion of great matters of the law with the doctors, asking and answering their questions; in which service, as he explained to Mary, He was attending to His Father's business. From the moment of His manifestation to Israel, though he was traveling from end to end of the land, when any of the great feasts were to be celebrated, He was to be found in or about the temple, teaching the people and expounding the law of the Kingdom. On the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the people hailed Him

as king, He was on the way to the temple, where He manifested His royalty by casting out the cattle drovers and money changers. And at the very last, when He was suffering the trial of the cross, as He surrendered the spirit, His close association with the temple was shown by the rending of the massive veil, which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. That rending of the veil was symbol of the termination of the priesthood of Aaron and the dawn of a new religious dispensation.

4. The fourth mark of identification was that He was to introduce a new covenant. Malachi had named Him "Messenger of the Covenant." Jeremiah had referred to such a new covenant in a remarkable passage: *"Behold the day cometh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake."* (Jer. 31:17). Paul, referring to this passage, applies it to Jesus, when in His word to the Hebrews he tells them that they are come to *"the mediator of the new covenant."* (Heb. 12:24).

5. The fifth mark of identification of the coming messenger was to the effect that the new covenant was to be an open door for the in-coming of the non-Hebrew races, so that they, too, by the divine mercy might become children of redeeming grace. Of this feature of the covenant Malachi declares, *"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense*

shall be offered in my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen saith the Lord of Hosts." (1:11).

The Psalmist shows that God had given the like pledge to the coming Savior, for we read in the second chapter, v. 8, "*Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*" Isaiah, who has been called the Evangelical Prophet, abounds with promises of the redemption of the Gentiles through the agency of the Messiah. One such is this passage, "*Behold my servant, whom I behold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring judgment to the Gentiles. * * * A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.*" (Isa. 42:1, 2). Thus the new Messenger was to be the herald of a new and all comprehensive hope, a Messenger of glad tidings to all men of every nation everywhere.

The Christ who came to the Holy Land in the Augustan Age fulfilled these amazingly accurate predictions of His work and mission to the letter. He came as an accredited and competent Covenant Bearer. No one of all the teachers and preachers of the former age compared with Him as a complete representative of the All Father. No one was His equal in spotlessness of character, in wisdom free from every flaw, or in the dignity of His presence. All previous messengers were themselves from the earth, but He was the Lord from Heaven. He declared Himself the Son of the

Father, and so the sacred voice that spoke from the heavens at His baptism pronounced Him.

Coming with such an origin and such antecedents, He was qualified to declare the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, and to include in its benefits all who accepted its provisions.

As the Covenant Bearer Christ brought a message of divine mercy. His code offers no hard and fast regulations, no law under which the innocent could be made guilty by help of clever technicalities. From first to last His covenant is to be spiritually interpreted, and it applies to spiritual motives and conditions. It calls for a service in which a spiritual worship, rendered in spirit and in truth, outweighs form and ceremony. Under the Gospel the fear of God is to be shown, not by the bullocks and lambs that are brought to the altar, but by voluntary heart consecration. Because God is love, He is the Father of His people, and of all service that can be rendered Him, the service of love is supreme and the most acceptable.

Because the Covenant Bearer was God's own Messenger and was bringing the supreme message of love, it was to be the ultimate, the final message of all. The Old Covenant with the Jews, which they had violated, and which God had abrogated, had passed into the dust bin of oblivion. But the New Covenant cannot be replaced or supplanted. Under the Gospel the chief of sinners may seek and obtain pardon; but whosoever rejects this Covenant of Infinite Mercy need not look for another to be offered him. There is no other: there can be no other. It is to Christ and His word that the wayward world must come. To Him it may

look for peace and favor. To Him it must look for instruction in righteousness and for the way to eternal glory.

Two considerations remain for the briefest comment.

In sending forth His Covenant Bearer, in making His proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ, God has completed His part in the vital compact of the ages. He has declared in all its beauty a plan of redemption, which should make commanding appeal to every pure and sincere soul. No one of sound mind could ask for a safer, a saner, or a more merciful covenant than this, which is offered through the gift of the Savior, our Christ.

Since God has done His full part in His tender of the New Covenant, the next query is, How stands the case with ourselves? For a real covenant, as we all well know, requires two contracting parties, whose minds have come to the meeting point of agreement in terms, and in fact of service. As to this Covenant of Grace, in order that men may avail themselves of its provisions, they must come into actual agreement with, and into actual acceptance of the Gospel, and then they must live in faithful performance of the vows that they have taken. It is to be hoped that men may see for themselves the Christ as their Covenant Bearer, and so enter into full covenant relations with the God of the Universe and into full possession of all the benefits which such a relationship confers.

THE PRIME REVELATION

III.

THE PRIME REVELATION

REVELATION is the declaration of the unknown, the bringing forth from the unseen to human sight or understanding the knowledge which but for this aid would have remained in obscurity. It concerns matters, some of them of the highest import, which lie outside the realm of human reason and experience.

In religion revelation makes clear the being of God, discloses His attributes, and sets forth the requirements which the divine power lays upon man, respecting the worship which he is to render, the obligation of personal morals, and the character of his service to God and to the world in which he is placed as a responsible being.

The Scriptures claim that the revelation of these matters was given to man from the beginning of his existence to a greater or less degree, and that other revelations have been given from time to time through the patriarchs of the Hebrew race. This contention has support from the well known fact that man in all ages and conditions has shown intimations of a feeling of dependence upon a superior power. Wherever the modern man has explored the remains of buried cities, the most substantial structures which he has unearthed as a rule have been those which have been devoted to some form of worship. The shrines of religion

have surpassed the palaces of kings in their extent, in their magnificence, and in their power to resist the forces of destruction of every kind. The reverence for the temple which was displayed in all these details of construction is a mute witness of the strength of the religious sentiment that was current in the ancient world.

And the universal prevalence of worship of some kind points to the conclusion of an early revelation to the race concerning God. For the conviction of the existence of a divine power appears to be the general inheritance of mankind. No tribe has yet been discovered, either so debased or so ignorant, as not to possess some idea of bending before Divinity, and of seeking in some manner to conciliate its favor.

Touching this idea of the divine Being, Voltaire is reported to have said, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him." Just what the brilliant essayist intended to convey by this remark is uncertain. It could not be that he was controverting the existence of a Supreme Being, for his free thinking never ran that far. Possibly he was saying that the revelation of God was so wide-spread, that all reasonable men must concur with the affirmation, and if such was his thought it has justification in the facts which have been mentioned. Or perchance he was saying that, as the human mind is constituted, in the course of its reasonings from effects back to causes, and as it turned its attention to the orderly conduct of the universe, it would some day take the bold leap from the finite to the infinite, from lower causes to the First Great Cause, from whom

all other causes proceed. If this were his meaning, he had good ground for his expression.

Man has the religious nature. Even in those who are wicked and cruel there is the latent force of a repressed religious longing. And wherever through mediation or by help of some external agency, like a spiritual awakening in the community, the better part of any man is aroused, he at once begins thinking about God, and about his obligation to the divine Power. Whoever in any assembly opens up the subject of God in a wise and tactful way is broaching the theme that will sound the hearts of his hearers to the profoundest depths. When Jesus therefore in His day introduced in His discourses a word respecting the divine existence, He was touching a very familiar chord.

And yet in His conversations with the Jews it might be thought from the casual glance that He was closing and sealing fast the door to the knowledge of God. For He declared to them definitely that the knowledge of the Divine, which they supposed they had, was no knowledge at all; that the current ideas of God and His attributes, which they had been cherishing, the ideas which they took with them to the synagogue worship, or to the temple worship, were vain and worthless, so that the God whom they were worshipping was in effect no God at all. This is the interpretation of His saying when He told them, *"No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son."* (Luke 10:22). That was a declaration that they were ignorant of God, that the Pharisees were ignorant of God, that the rabbis with all their learning were ignorant of

God, that the priests who ministered at the altar were ignorant of God, and that the whole body and trend of their established religion, because of this prevalent ignorance of the True God, was a vain and unprofitable service, and much more a hindrance than a help to a pure spiritual life.

But withal, while this bold statement may have seemed discouraging on the face, it was preparation for better knowledge. The certainty that one does not know may stimulate the desire to know. The stolid ignorance that thanks God for its ignorance is fortifying itself in continued ignorance. The African savage, who worships a carved stick, or a lump of clay, and who trembles at walking some familiar path, which the witch-doctor has barred with a bunch of feathers, is impervious to the consideration of a God of mercy and love, till he is well rid of the witch-doctor and all his stupid tricks and contrivances. The Galilean peasants, whom Jesus was teaching, ranked higher in the scale of intelligence than the poor savage, and yet they were as thoroughly in the dark as was he respecting the nature and attributes of Divinity. For in their minds they were continually imputing traits to God which were foreign to him, and they had no conception at all of the high traits which were essential to his real being. Practically to them he was but a tribal god, partial to the Jew and hostile to the Samaritan; loving the sons of Abraham, but regardless of the millions on millions of other people who were scattered all over the earth. They thought of Him also as a martinet god, a stickler for petty forms and observances; as insisting of the tithing of herbs,

while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, such as justice, mercy, and righteousness. To all these assumptions they added another in imagining Him to be a purchasable God, who could be bribed by dint of gifts and sacrifices to overlook their iniquities. In all this they were in the same evil case as the older Israel, whom God reproached with that biting accusation, *"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."* (Ps. 50:21). While they remained in that state of moral misconception, right living and the right approach to God were impossible. For their own moral improvement their darkness must be enlightened, and they be taught to draw nigh to God in a more intelligent way.

But how can God be known truly by those who have misconceived His nature? How can they come to know Him as He is, to know the length and depth and height of the moral perfections of the Infinite?

Some have imagined that God may be learned through His handiwork in the natural world. And it is possible through that source, after having the original revelation of Deity as a working basis, to acquire improved conceptions of His existence and His power. All His works in the infinity of their extent, and in their magnitude, and in their orderly action and interaction, proclaim His glory. He who has spread the heavens as a canopy for His throne, and has strung the starry orbs into a pearly girdle of omnipotence, must be boundless in power and infinite in wisdom. But to know merely the God of Power and of Glory is to acquire the alphabet of celestial knowledge. Men there

are in numbers who behold all that glory of nature and who still stand apart from Him. By no means all who have made intimate exploration of the sciences, by no means all who have traced the orderly progress of earth-building in the structure of the rock-ribbed mountains, by no means all who have toiled with retorts and test-tubes and batteries, till they have mastered the secret of how the elements combine with each other and in what proportions, by no means all who have observed the motion of the heavenly bodies till they have come to weigh the sun and the stars as in a balance, are of necessity in touch with God. Of all men such should be eminent in loyalty and devotion, and the most of them are; and yet conspicuous names might be mentioned of chemists who have been immoral, of astronomers who were far from being models of religious observance, and of geologists who were little short of being pronounced atheists. We are not to look in either the telescope or the microscope to find the higher attributes of the Deity, since these are to be spiritually discerned and by help of a spiritual revelation. All the experience of the centuries confirms the conclusion in the mind of Zophar, that friend of Job, when he put the question, *"Canst thou by searching find out God?"* None have so found Him from that day to the present hour.

And philosophy may not be depended on as a reliable agency for the revelation of God. Philosophizing has been a common task, or diversion, of man from the earliest age, and unless supported from a better source has been a blind leader of the

blind. The desert caves of Egypt, where lone hermits were musing on man and his relation to "the divine essence," the huts and shrines of India in which Buddhist bonzes and twice-born Brahmans meditated on the composition of matter and the nature of the soul, the porch and the garden of Athens where the sophists lounged and debated whether there were many gods, or one, or none at all; and the monastic cells of mediaeval Europe in which shaven monks discussed realism and nominalism, and whether such words as "man," or "tree," or "ship," were nothing but the names of a class of objects, or were designations of objects representative of such classes, furnish ample illustration of the futility of the attempt to arrive at the essence of Being by abstract process of reasoning. The fundamental ideas of God and righteousness cannot be thus apprehended. When we mention philosophies, it is to recall the feuds of generations; this philosophy assailing that philosophy, both of which were soon to be superseded by some other philosophy, which itself presently was crowded out by some other still. The philosophical right of one age has been the mortal sin of the next. The God of one age has been well named the devil of the next. Consequently the search in the halls of philosophy and in the libraries of the philosophers for the knowledge of God, is as vain a task as hunting for sunshine in the depths of the Mammoth Cave.

But, where the voice of nature is inadequate, and where human philosophy stands confusedly mumbling its vain contradictions, Christ speaks to the people, and through the open door of His self-

revelation brings home to their apprehension the glory of the divine nature and of the divine purpose in the redemption of humanity. When Jesus told the people, *"No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him,"* (Luke 10:22) He was suggesting to them how they might expect God to be made known. And still later he offered the like suggestion, when at the Last Supper He said to Philip, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."*

Through the medium of that expression, and of others akin to it, we are given assurance of the intensely personal nature of the Christian faith. It is warmer and more vital than any abstract system of ethics that the mind can conceive; for the abstract system, though as pure as the driven snow is quite likely to be as cold and unattractive as the snow. There is a sorrowful tale of the Spanish Grandee, who had been cast into a dungeon by the king. His son raised an army for his deliverance, but before a battle Alphonso, the king, promised to release his prisoner. The day of deliverance arrived. From a distance the cavalcade could be seen winding its way through the mountain passes. At length the prisoner was distinguished at the head of the troop supported deferentially in his saddle by a knight at the right and left. When the two detachments met, the son fell at his father's feet and reached up to clasp the father's hand, but

> "That hand was cold, a frozen thing,
> It fell from his like lead."

The treacherous king had released the Count as he

had promised, but only to send a dead man to the arms of the living. Our faith reaches out no such hand of death. Instead, it proffers us a living Christ, who is Himself the incarnation of all winsome graces, and who in His own life and endearing sympathies makes clearly manifest the tender mercies and loving care of the Heavenly Father.

The revelation of the Father which is made through Christ, the prime revelation, begins with the disclosure of the Divine personality. As Christ was Himself a sentient being, a personality, one who could think for Himself, who could plan and execute and communicate His thought to others, so the All-Father is a sentient Being, a Moral Ruler in a moral universe. This revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ as a personality at a single stroke clears away the fog of doubts and heresies with which the Divine nature has been obscured and beclouded.

One such ancient notion of the Deity was naturalism, the identification of God with nature, and the making nature to be God, or at least all the God there is. That view was common in the early world, where man was facing the elemental forces; the rage of the tempest, the sweep of torrential floods, or the tremors and devastation of the volcano and the earthquake.

Another error respecting God was fatalism, the concession to God of power to act, but to act only within limits that were predestined and predetermined, so that events for future ages were established from the beginning, and must ensue in their fateful course; a course which the divine power itself was helpless to alter or amend. An idea

like this was underlying the earlier philosophies of Greece, it colored the thought of the Stoics, and it still lingers in the theology of the Moslem, who will not move to avert an impending plague, because he would esteem it a cardinal sin to stand against the appointed way of God.

A modern perversion of this notion is to be observed in the trust which some repose in second causes. Some of our modern theorizers in the course of their investigation of natural phenomena discover that many results, which formerly were regarded as acts of God, are to be attributed to natural causes, which work in obedience to natural law. The tempests roar, and the rains fall, through the combined action of the heat of the sun, of electrical currents moving in the clouds, and of atmospheric rivers, which have been set in motion by the rotation of the earth. When the rains fall to excess, or when there has been a withering drouth, the harvests fail over wide areas of territory. Cloud bursts in the mountainous tracts of China may cause her mighty rivers to overflow and drive thousands of helpless people to death by drowning or famine. Because some of these natural phenomena may be accounted for in this manner, there are some who conclude that similar secondary causes may account for all the processes of nature, and that in consequence no occasion is left to think of a First Great Cause at all; of a First Great Cause who moves and regulates and controls all other causes.

So might one argue on watching a modern engine as it drives a great ship through the stormy sea. He notes the fires under the boilers,

which account for the making of steam. He observes the pistons working back and forth in the massive cylinders under the pressure of the steam. He sees the connecting rods which drive the great cranks and turn the shaft, which propels the ship through the water. Here he has a whole series of second causes, and if he were to look no further he might declare that the ship was driving itself. But if so he has forgotten the engineer and the hand on the throttle that turned on the steam!

And the Christ who reveals the personality of God reveals the Mind and the Hand that starts and controls the mechanism of the universe. The God whom he shows us is not nature, is not a Being who is enslaved by an iron-clad determinism, is not dominated by second causes, is not an impersonal complexity of natural laws, but is a Divine Personality, who unveils himself in the person of Jesus, with the personal touch of the teacher to his disciples, and of friend with friend.

Christ is representative of God in His never-failing righteousness. Righteousness has two forms: the first of which is in doing the right and in never doing the wrong; and second, in discountenancing anything less than the highest righteousness in the conduct of others. As one studies the life of Jesus he will remark that no one ever found any wrong of any kind attached to Him, and also that He never glozed over the wrong doing which others committed. In the presence of Jesus, to whom not so much as a suspicion of evil could attach, evil always stood abashed and confounded. And in this implicit and

inherent righteousness in His own example, Jesus was displaying the everlasting righteousness of the Father. And because God Himself was the righteousness, the source and origin of all righteousness, He could say to the Son, as in the epistle, "*Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*" (Heb. 1:29).

Christ represents the friendliness of God. This was an attribute which the ancient world could hardly associate with its thought of Divinity. The gods of the heathen for the most part were portrayed as monsters of cruelty, delighting in spreading death and calamity abroad, or else sitting in serene heedlessness of mortal complaints and miseries. And the prevailing idea of God among the Jews was but little better. If they did not impute to Him the reckless rage of the heathen divinities, they set Him far apart from humanity upon a lofty throne of exclusive isolation. But Jesus in revealing God makes it evident that He was in sympathy with man. When the Master first called His disciples, and later when He was going with them up and down in Judea and Galilee, He made Himself friendly with the people everywhere. Any one who came to Him with a question or a trouble had instant access to His presence. For the humblest suppliant He would break off in the midst of his most important discourses. Everywhere and always He was engaged in works of kindness and mercy. And while He

was busied with these, He insisted that His every deed of kindness, His every act of mercy, was from and through the Father. Hear Him declare to His disciples, *"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."* (John 14:10). And His attitude toward the disciples was one of utter friendliness. They were with Him in the closest possible intimacy by day and by night; and so He says to them, *"I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."* (John 15:15). And this friendliness of Jesus it is to be remembered is the friendliness of God.

And Christ reveals God in His spirit of tenderness and considerate compassion. For Christ was pre-eminently the helper of the people. Wherever there was urgent need, thither He turned His steps; there His hand was extended with blessing. The pitifulness of God is displayed beautifully in the parable of the lost sheep. The ninety and nine in the fold were cared for sufficiently. It was the one lost sheep, the one that had wandered out on the mountain cold and bare, that he was searching for, and that when it was found He lifted and carried home in His bosom. That is God's attitude toward the sinner. God knows, and Christ knows, the difference between sin and the sinner. And God is seeking for the sinners, moving upon their hearts by His Holy Spirit, striving with them to bring them to repentance, and standing ready at the first sign of response to His call, to lift them

up and restore them to the fellowship of His grace.

And Christ gives us the freest representation of God in His revelation of the Divine Fatherhood. There was little like that in the Jewish notion of Divinity. To mention such a thought in connection with God they felt was little short of sacrilege. There was one of the names of God which they hardly dared to utter. When they spoke that name to another they whispered, and when they read that name in the reading of the Scripture lessons in the synagogue service, they always substituted for it another name, which they considered less significant and sacred. They thought of God in His sovereignty, as the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe, ever distant and unapproachable. But Christ the revealer brings God down toward the worshipper. When a man prays, Christ teaches him to say, *"Our Father who art in heaven."*

The wanderer out in the fields of dissipation and sin is to know that there is a loving Father who desires his reclamation, and he can be told in the words of Jesus, *"It is not the will of your Father, which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."* (Matt. 18: 14). It is a loving Father, who looks down from heaven, and whose all-embracing love not all the neglect, and error, and sin of His children can turn aside, and who out of the depths of His infinite love sent us His Son with the message of salvation. Just that was Christ's representation of God, the Prime Revelation, when at the outset of His ministry, in the interview with Nicodemus, he declared, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten*

Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

Since Christ has presented God to the world in these intimate and loving ways, His prime relevation should be received with gladness and thanksgiving. As the child runs to meet the parent, and lifts its hand for the hand clasp of the father, so should God's earthly children, casting away all doubting and fears, come to the Divine Father, and rest in His love with the confidence of a perfect trust.

CELESTIAL COMPASSION

IV.

CELESTIAL COMPASSION

THE difference between the world as God made it, and as man has altered it, is by no means to the credit of mankind. Nature in its natural condition is ever and always harmoniously beautiful. The precipitous mountain, the rolling prairie land carpeted with flowers, the verdant islets studding some inland sea are perfection itself in their individual charm, and they appeal to whatever artistic sense we possess. But when we compare what God has done for man with what man has been doing for himself we have even more occasion for our pride to take a sudden fall. For with all its nobility and strength, humanity abounds with frailty and weakness. How hard is the path of the transgressor! What retributions and scourges beset him! What plagues and penalties and fell diseases combine to distress and destroy him!

And yet, with these hindrances to transgression, how easy the wandering astray! Right: that means self-control and self-restraint. It means resistance to evil suggestion. It means the exercise of good judgment and holding a close rein over impulse and passion. To stand by the right in an even course demands decision of character and long schooling. Taken in the mass, men are stumblers. Whoever takes half a day to

sit in the police court will wonder at the fatal facility with which the many walk into trouble with eyes wide open. What foolishness of temptation! What pettiness of theft! What abysses of degeneracy in thought and conduct!

And how much better is the prospect when one turns to the higher social scale? In the parable a self-centered Pharisee once thanked God that he was so much better than other men, one of whom was close at hand. No doubt about it that he was considered more respectable, but probably only because he was more successful in hiding his misdoings. What lying he indulged in was artistic and not readily to be detected. He was no burglar, breaking into other people's houses. True enough; but what of the likelihood that he was robbing the widow and the fatherless under the forms of law? How much better in that case was he than the burglar after all? That Pharisee enjoyed confessing the faults of his neighbor. But that was an infirmity also. When the time of final judgment comes it is highly probable that in the list of human ills that men must answer for, the sin of faultfinding will have place near the top of the citation. And yet how prevalent is the censorious spirit! How the rich grumble at the shiftlessness of the poor, and how the poor get back at the rich by grumbling at their luxuriousness and prodigality. Prosperity turns up her dainty nose at poverty, and vice sneeringly accuses virtue as being just like herself, barring a thin veneer of propriety. Every class takes its fling at every other class, and if it can find nothing else to find fault about it can cover the whole range of per-

sonal characteristics, and score the fit of a garment or the way a neighbor carries his head. Tennyson in his Maud touches upon this weakness:

"Ah, yet we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour.
We whisper and hint and chuckle and grin at a brother's shame:
However we brave it out, we men are a little breed."

But these self-same traits of humanity which shame us, and for which we show keen aversion, whenever encountered in others, aroused in the Savior the tenderest interest and compassion. In that incident of the maniac, who made his home in the tombs, His heart was drawn to the lone man who was driven to make such a place his habitation, and whose mad ravings had long been the terror of the countryside. What a repulsive creature he was! A giant in stature, of such unusual strength that he could tear asunder the iron chains with which the authorities sought to bind him; gaunt, and with hair and beard matted from long neglect, what could the Savior have to do with such as he? What indeed would the world have in common with the outcast? The world prefers to consort with the successful man; with the man who has knowledge enough, and force enough, to make his way alone, to stand on his own feet and ask favors of nobody. Were it not preferable, so the world would ask, for this man, and for society, if he were to perish at once, since he must perish soon in any event?

But no. That was not the way with the Savior at all. Despite all the hatefulness of the man Jesus extends to him the kindly hand. He addresses him with the compassionate word which

soothes his frenzy and adds the word of healing which restores the man to society, to his family, and to himself. *"Go home to thy friends,"* so said the Master, *"and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."* (Mark 5:19).

Compassion, the caring for and helping others, is the predominating feature, the outstanding fact in the ministry of Jesus. Of course Christ exhibits wisdom, and power, and righteousness, all of them unsurpassed and unsurpassable; but even more prominently than these, like the sunlight before which the stars fade in the heavens, shines out the Savior's divine compassion. From first to last all his acts were radiant with pity and sympathy. At Bethlehem the angels sang of peace and good-will, and at the closing scene, other angels in the gloom of Calvary witnessed His gentle mercy to the malefactor, and heard that matchless prayer for the persecutors, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* (Luke 23:34).

The compassion of Jesus was all the more divine, since it displayed no prejudice or partiality. Men are prone to raise distinctions of family or race. They indulge much speech of the brotherhood of humanity, but in practice they incline to treat it as a splendid ideal, to be extolled at a distance, but when near at hand to be applied according to the circumstances and momentary convenience. The history of the world shows little of the brotherhood of humanity, but much of wranglings, and struggles and wars between neighborhoods and nations. Some tribes and nations have

made fighting their chief business, and have relied on the sword for their sustenance precisely as others have relied on the plow, or the flock, or the factory. When the whole truth is told, if it ever can be, respecting the abuses which the white man has perpetrated on the black man, the red man, the brown man, and the yellow man, it will convulse the heart of the world. What can we say of the horrors of the middle passage, of the auction block, of the rice fields, of the cypress swamps and the bay of the blood hound? Whoever knows of these occurrences would fain blot them from remembrance, but they can never be blotted out. Nor may we take to our souls the consolation that all such enormities may be relegated to some untaught and far distant past. Our own generation has been startled by the desperate cry of the million starved and massacred in Armenia, and we have heard the tramp of the legions that ransacked and desolated at their sweet will the cities and out-lying districts of Belgium and Northern France. A favorite doctrine with those who have filled the seats of the mighty is the dictum that the many have no rights which the powerful are bound to respect. It is a doctrine that dies hard, but it is dying, and it was the hand of the Christ that struck the mortal blow. His main care was never for any special group or class of men, whether of a city, or a tribe, or an occupation; but for all men as men, and particularly for the man who was suffering. What a lesson of genuine humanity He taught all those people who delight themselves in their exclusiveness, the Pharisees, the separatists, the four hundred, when He

related that parable of the Good Samaritan! When He reached the end of that tale, His hearer, the Pharisee, was forced to the admission that the hated Samaritan, the man with whom the Jew would not sit at table or even engage in trade, was a nobler soul than his own priest or Levite.

Jesus was compassionate to the woman of Syro-Phoenecia, when she came asking help for her daughter who was dying. She was of an alien race, but that did not concern Him or hinder His listening to her appeal. For He saw in her, not the stranger, not the foreigner, but the woman in distress, and so the relief which He gave was instant and complete. With that act He shattered every wall of prejudicial exclusiveness and taught His church that Jew or Greek, bond or free, circumcized or uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, were all on the same level in the sight of God.

And as He thus set aside every distinction of race origin, so He overturned all barriers of position and condition. Rich or poor, popular or unpopular; all were alike to Him, and He was the friend and helper of them all. Blind men, impotent men, lepers, publicans and sinners, social outcasts; all who came to Him were able to tell afterward how Christ had compassion on them. No life was so blighted by mistake or misfortune that it could not feel the cheer of the Master's voice, and rejoice in His gentle sympathy which soothed every sorrow.

Christ's attitude toward the sinner was in striking contrast with the spirit of His age, as manifested among the Jews and all others also. It is understood that of all things which God must

abominate, and which Christ was set to overthrow and destroy, the chief of all was the spirit and domination of sin. Sin: that is fighting against God. Sin: that is open defiance of God. Sin: that is blocking the purposes of the divine Providence. Sin: that is destroying in man the forces that would make for his salvation. Surely Christ in His pure nature must have realized the nature of sin and have recoiled from its presence as from a mortal plague. And yet, though Christ hated the sin, He loved the sinner. There is one scene in the Gospel story which proves this beyond the shadow of a doubt. One day there came to Him a company of men, rage filling their hearts, and bringing a woman against whom they asked His instant judgment. They said she had been caught in the act which disgraced her womanhood, and by the law she should be stoned to death. For this they asked him to pronounce the sentence. Poor soul! What chance had she, all shame-faced and broken hearted? Who knows her history, what temptations she suffered, what snares were craftily set to compass her ruin? Scandalized society knew nothing of that and cared still less. But what a spectacle was that; the angry accusers, the shrinking woman, and the silent Christ, who was stooping there and writing with His finger in the sand! What was the writing? No need for speculation about that, for His main concern at that moment was not the writing, but the woman; for He was so lovingly compassionate that He would not add to the sinner's grief by so much as looking her in the face. He counted them all as sinners, the accusers as well as the accused. It

is an old trick for the wicked to pose in the attitude of innocence. The thief when he is hunted is wont to shout "Stop thief!" more vociferously than honest men. Rogues are always suspicious of roguery. Judgment commonly falls most harshly from lips. All of them were sinners, and Christ looks at none of them. Still writing there on the ground He calmly says, *"Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her."* How infinitely gentle and yet how infinitely scorching that word! And those men felt it so, and they began filing out one by one. The judgment throne of conscience in every bosom had declared its sentence, and soon every man had gone. And when Christ and the woman were left alone, He asked of her kindly, *"Where are those thine accusers?"* When she replied that they had departed, He bade her go also and sin no more. Amazing the delicacy of Christ's compassion. Surely many hearts must have been won for virtue and truth that day.

This wonderful compassion of Jesus is to be comprehended only when it is observed that it was exercised toward man as man; toward every man as being the child of God. Christ's ocean of compassion overswept every side of humanity, as the waters fit themselves to every outline of the shore. His mission was for the saving of men. He came to fan the latent spark of goodness in every heart and kindle it to a conquering flame. He understood that the soul shrinks from harshness and that the best solvent of stubborn pride and waywardness is love. And so He loved everything that was human. Then and now every

child of God, even the one who has marred God's image by weakness and sin, may lay claim to the compassion of Jesus; a compassion which will meet every need of the changed and penitent soul.

In the study of the compassionate Christ it is to be observed that compassion was a necessity of His nature. His love, which was the love of heaven, held no contaminations of selfish fear. What frequently hinders men from following the counsel of their hearts is that their heads are calculating consequences. They dread to be too charitable, lest the calls for charity will make them bankrupt. They may not be too helpful, lest some one suspect them of feeling more sympathy with the sin than with the sinner. Then also they figure up profit and loss. Much of our boasted science is utilitarian, too much so for the encouragement of sentiment. It has commendation for the survival of the fittest, which properly interpreted means the weak to the wall. When Sir Walter Scott lost his favorite dog, he set a headstone over his grave. No doubt not a few shrewd people of that region deplored such waste of good Scotch granite. And the same class would deplore the waste of sentiment with men. If it is sound doctrine that only the fit should survive, then let the weak go on getting weaker, and let the sinful by help of their sins destroy themselves, so that the race of evil-doers may indulge themselves to utter destruction. But that is not God's way with sinners. No fear with Him of compromising His position. He has a care for His people. He would save the weak, and have the strong exert their strength in helping the weak. *"Herein,"* so says

Jesus, *"is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."* (John 15:8). And the fruit that He desires is the reclamation of manhood, the turning of sinners to righteousness. It is a wonderful thing to create an Adam from the dust of the ground, to take the "red earth" and give it the proportions of a man, with all physical and moral powers and capacities, to make the man in the image of God; but it is a still more wonderful thing to recreate the man, to turn the skeptic from his scoffing to the utterance of prayer, to change the heart which has been a nest of vile imaginings, so that it has become the haven of purity and goodness.

And Christ is compassionate because He accepts to the full the ideal of brotherhood. Paul following Jesus declared that God *"hath made of one blood all nations of men."* (Acts 17:26). In His universal prayer the Savior taught the unity of race and the unity of faith, when He bade His disciples say, *"Our Father, who art in heaven."* When He prayed for Himself He said, *"Father."* This was no less than the acknowledgment of kinship between Christ and all humanity. Paul gives the thought further expression in the pertinent passage, *"For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."* (Heb. 2:11). What is the manifest conclusion from this thought of kinship between Christ and humanity? What happens in the home when a brother has been tempted and follows some evil course? Will the family denounce him and turn him off, washing their hands of him

completely? Not if there is real love in that family circle. If real love is actuating the hearts of the rest in that home, they will plead with him and strive to bring him back to the right path. And this they will do, not once nor twice, but so long as there remains a shadow of hope for his saving. And Christ loves men. His heart reaches out to them, no matter how lost and degraded they have become. And so He puts forth every effort to bring them to salvation.

Christ is compassionate still more because He sees the wonderful possibilities of which any soul may be capable. Imagine a carrier dove that has ventured toward the claws of its enemy the cat. How soon is its plumage ruffled, are its wings torn and bleeding, and death is staring it in the face. But some friendly hand comes to its rescue, binds up its wounds and smoothes out the ruffled pinions. What joy when it spreads its wings once more in the upper air, and is free to pursue its own career untrammeled and unafraid! So it is with the soul of man. Sin is its direst foe. Sin tears it; sin mangles it; sin would destroy it. But when once clear of its captor and alive unto God, it may become fit companion for saints and angels in the glory of Paradise.

The Compassionate Christ in His compassionate life has set the example for all Christians. The great Flavel once said, "The soul is the life of the body." If this be so, we may say that faith is the life of the soul, and that Christ is the life of faith. On that basis all advance toward faith lies along the path of Christlikeness. That signifies doing His will, feeling with His sympathies, growing

into the spirit of tender and kindly helpfulness, and having the whole heart with its every throb expressive of Christian gentleness and love. Blessed such a life, for it is the assurance of peace and of overcoming the world.

CHRIST'S NOVEL WAY WITH SINNERS

V.

CHRIST'S NOVEL WAY WITH SINNERS

CHRIST was the most successful reformer that the world has known. Where others have planned for a day, He planned for a day and for eternity. Where others planned to no avail, He planned and accomplished. He set in motion far-reaching revolutions in method and conduct, and their influence still abides. He encountered some of the worst of men, men who have been deaf to every voice of affection, who had spurned the warnings of conscience, and who seemed dead to the common instincts of humanity, and these men listened to Him with the result that their lives were reconstructed altogether. And that kind of work, instituted by our Lord two thousand years ago, has been moving on, extending in ever widening circles, till it has altered the face of civilization. If now in this twentieth century there are anywhere efforts for the amelioration of long-standing abuses and for improvements in social organization, it is evident that they have had their inspiration from Him, and have been following His ways. And also, wherever society has suffered the miscarriage of its plans for the reclamation of the erring, it will be found that its most serious mistakes have resulted from clinging to its own projects and doggedly refusing to take lessons in these matters from the Master.

One way for reform which has been the favorite with governments for ages has been the application of force. It is conceded that in some instances force is justified. As the ultimate resort reliance may be placed on the strong hand. When a foreign foe sends its ships and legions to invade our country it is the bugle call of patriotism that summons the loyal citizen to arms for the national defence. Similarly in case of riot or serious domestic disturbance any trifling with the mob is to insure the worse disorder. The occasion demands a show of authority, and that of the kind that will inspire law breakers with respect for orderly government.

But the application of force as an agency for the promotion of moral reform is ill advised, since harsh measures as a rule have the tendency to harden and brutalize both the offender and those who are seeking to correct him. There was a period in England when her judges were sending her minor offenders to the gallows. Stealing a sucking pig, or a silk handkerchief, at that period laid one liable to the extreme penalty, and the consequence of such severity in the administration of justice was the hardening and emboldening of the whole criminal class. The commission of the minor offence was sufficient to make life a forfeit to the law. Do what a man might, the penalty could be no worse. It was from that date that the grim proverb, "As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," became current. Because many people thought in that manner their common conviction assumed this expression. All over England skeletons of offenders who had been hanged were sus-

pended in chains, the foul odor everywhere corrupting the air, and helping to produce pestilence; but that terrible sight was no deterrent to crime, for the more that the public mind became accustomed to such horrors, the more reckless the bad became in their wickedness.

When it becomes evident that no headway can be made against sin by stern measures applied in excess, society is sometimes foolish enough to run to the opposite extreme of giving free rein to sin, imagining possibly that it can be cured by suffering the scourges of its own mischiefs. Sometimes parents adopt this easy-going discipline in raising a family, a plan which may be characterized in the familiar phrase of "letting things slide." The infant must have everything he calls for, else he will hold his breath till he is black in the face. The boys must grow up like wild colts, for to restrain them in any respect is too troublesome. If they wrangle and cuff one another in the public street; if they throw stones at the passing horses in summer, or snowball pedestrians in winter, what else is to be expected of them? How else can they expend their exuberant spirits? In such manner we have a hoodlum class growing up; a class that is self-indulgent, idle, vulgar, and brutal; a class that lines the curbing in the cities, where it insults respectable citizens; a class that crowds the station houses in winter; a class that lights its pipe in the farmer's barn or under his haystack, and flings its matches about and doesn't care a brass nickel whether his buildings catch fire or not; a class that terrorizes lone women; a class that piles obstructions on the railway track in its crazy

greed for plunder, and does not seem to suffer a single twinge of conscience for the scores that its recklessness may hurl to sudden death. And though all these sad consequences are occurring daily before our eyes, the same thing goes right on unchecked. Instead of the parents governing their children, the children govern their parents and come to maturity without ever having learned self-control. The lazy tramp overawes the country and nothing effectual is done for his suppression. And so society suffers and great evils wax worse and worse.

Another way of the world in moral correction which has little to recommend it, is the adoption of passive goodness, the choice of a life of purity and respectability, but all for one's self. Possibly there is in such case a vague notion that the excellence of one's demeanor will exert a beneficial influence upon those who are less refined, and so incline them unconsciously toward goodness. But that attitude is altogether inadequate for the reclamation of sinners. Goodness as a social factor can never content itself with mere goodness. The church does not fill the measure of its usefulness by camping out on the border of iniquity and there practicing its dress parade of worship and observance of the ordinances. When the church has been organized and officered, and duly equipped with its preacher, and its choir, and its deacons, and its Sunday School, and all the allied societies and committees of every class, it has simply gotten itself ready to begin the campaign. In some parts of the west they are plagued with a new weed, the Russian thistle. It grows to be taller

than a man. It spreads itself out in a great bunch of prickly luxuriance and fecundity. When it has once established itself there is no end to its spreading in every direction. Imagine a field covered with such thistles, every clump branching out into a dozen or more thistle balls, every thistle ball carrying its two to three hundred winged seeds to be wafted broadcast by every wanton breeze, and then think of a farmer coming up and building his cabin on the edge of that thistle patch, and planting a neat little garden there by way of giving a good example to the thistles. That is a situation that calls for something more heroic than a good example. To subdue that rank overgrowth of agricultural contamination the man must pull off his coat and go to plowing and root grubbing. And it is much the same with the church in its campaign against the rank weeds of error and sin. That is no child's play and demands the best energies and the best appliances of spiritual agriculture. When the churches become alive to their social obligation and get right down to practical ways of character building and character reclamation; when they emulate the spirit and example of Jesus in their labors with what we sometimes term "the submerged classes," they will exercise a broader influence and will stir all our communities to nobler purpose.

The Gospels furnish us a fine example of our Lord's novel way with sinners in that interview with the rich man who made him a banquet, to which came the woman who washed His feet with her tears. Because of her loving action that day the Lord extended her His forgiveness. And yet

while doing so He said to the rich man, who was criticizing her, *"Her sins which are many are forgiven her."* (Luke 7: 47).

In this expression we may notice the Divine truthfulness. Christ does not forget that sin is sinful, and whoever commits sin is a sinner. And this is the regular attitude in the moral government of God. It is the attitude which pervades the teaching of the Bible. From first to last, from the transgression in Eden to the declaration in the Revelation that nothing can enter heaven that defileth or maketh a lie, sin is portrayed as vile, hateful, and abominable. God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. A familiar symbol for sin in the Scripture is leprosy, which is one of the most repulsive among human diseases. When the Scripture likens sin to leprosy the intention is to mark it as corruption, as putridity of the soul.

There are philosophies of the hour which take issue with that view. In their easy going way they would make sin out to be a sort of bodily humor, a mere bodily disorder; and according to this fine theory when the sinner leaves his body behind him at death, he casts off with it all his bodily temptations and evil inclinations, as one slips out of a useless garment; and that he then has his soul pure and clean of all moral defilement, so that he has become as innocent as an angel. But God's Book does not present the matter in that convenient light. That Book pronounces the severest penalties against sin—penalties, unless the sin has been repented of, which run on into, and affect the standing of the sinner in the eternal world.

And we know very well that sin as a disorder strikes its roots into tissues that are deeper down than the body. We have witnessed rages and revenges which have burst up from the innermost soul. The venom of sin runs deep, and if it has its course it will presently make the whole head sick and the whole heart faint.

While the Scripture is so explicit respecting the hatefulness of sin in its ultimate nature, it is equally frank and outspoken respecting its consequences. These are altogether evil and not at all to be desired. My Lord never spoke a favorable word for the fruits of wickedness, and much that He said of them was emphatic of their horror. Of offences He declared, *"Woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh."* (Matt. 18:7). If the tares of evil grow up they may grow till the harvest, but they are to be burned in the fire. If one lives wickedly and leads others into wickedness, it were better for him if a millstone were hung about his neck and if he were cast into the depths of the sea.

And Jesus who teaches the truth about sin exalts the beauty of righteousness. All commendation carries with itself the sting of reprobation. For only those who deserve commendation are to receive it, and those who fail to receive commendation lie under blame. Much may be learned by contrasts. Light is not darkness, and by the same token every word of blessing in the beatitudes is a warning; a blessing to the pure in heart, a blessing to the poor in spirit, a blessing to the merciful; but conceding that, it also signifies sorrow and bitterness to the vile, to the haughty, and to the

merciless of the earth. The Sermon on the Mount is a treasury of instruction. There are men who are not first class samples as Christians who will excuse their course by saying that they take the Sermon on the Mount as the guide of their lives. Those who actually take that Sermon as guide are to be congratulated. Such are not far from the Kingdom of God. He who takes the Sermon on the Mount as his guide will be so firm and uncompromising in goodness that the men of the world will be for persecuting him. He will be hungering and thirsting after righteousness to such degree that to every eye he will be filled with righteousness. He would never give houseroom to an impure thought. He would never fret and fume about troubles that the morrow might bring. Before all else he would be seeking after God and the righteousness of God. It is a splendid thing to be living in the Sermon on the Mount, for whoever dwells there openly and unreservedly is a disciple of the Lord.

Jesus' way with sin was to apply the same kind of rule to specific cases. Divine truth attests its divinity by its being the same in all aspects, the same in the announcements of the law, the same in the concrete, in the dealing of the law with individual men. In this respect we remark how far man's ways differ from the ways of God. It is the common thing with us to frame the sternest kind of codes against evil doing, and then when some evil doer, who is connected with us somehow—who belongs to our family, or to our social set—is brought to book for the matter, we set ourselves to ease up on the law, to pull its teeth, to make a

special exemption for the benefit of our pet offender. Some one has been forging a check. Too bad, but clap him in jail. But he is Mr. So-and-So's brother-in-law. Yes, that makes a difference. In that case we must not act too rashly. Poor lad! He must have been sorely tempted. Perhaps we can get up a petition to have him pardoned out.

It is by such practices, by having one kind of law for the stranger, and another kind of law for our kindred, or for our special friends, that the administration of the law is brought into contempt. Very fortunate it is that the administration of the divine law is not committed to human hands, that it is in the hands of the just Judge who worketh righteousness.

Recently a prominent member of a fashionable church in criticism of some plain Bible teaching remarked, "We don't permit any of that kind of theology in our church." In his congregation they were following a special by-path to Paradise, and they had put a stopper on the preacher's mouth, so that he would not mention any other path. They were managing so as to grind the edge off from God's denunciation of sin. They were doing in a round-about way what Protestants have been complaining of the Romanists for doing directly. Protestants lay the charge at the door of Rome that she compounds sin by her pretence of pardoning sin, great or small, in exchange for money that is paid to the priest. But the Romanist who is up-to-date can get it back on some of the Protestants that they are compounding sin by altering the force of the Scriptural denunciations

against sin; that we are practicing under two religious codes; under a strict and stringent code for the friendless and the stranger, and under a code that is more elastic and easy-going to be applied for ourselves or for those in whom we are taking special interest.

Nothing of that sort is to be discovered with Christ, or with the Gospel which He teaches. His firm hands hold the even balance, and He makes the rule precisely the same, whether it be in some statement of the Divine purpose, or in his treatment of the individual offender. This is clearly to be seen in the instance of the woman, of whom mention has already been made. She had shown a tender heart. She seemed to have some premonition of the approaching tragedy, and she was weeping as she knelt and embraced the Savior's feet. With what a flood of surging love she wiped those feet with her flowing hair.

But what effect has this action of her's upon Christ's estimate of her past record? He does not permit it to gloze over anything, to conceal anything, to alter anything. The Lord does not abate one jot of the fact that she has been a sinner. Nor does He palliate her wrong-doing as if it had been a trifle, for He says, "Her sins which are many." In other words, He characterizes her as a notable sinner, who had been committing sin again and again. To speak of her in that manner, before her face and in the face of the assembled company at the banquet, was very plain speaking.

And our Lord is quite as plain and truthful in dealing with Simon. Simon was his host. He had spread this feast in honor of the illustrious visitor.

Yet when the host began murmuring in his heart because of the woman, Jesus straitway showed him his true condition. "Simon," so the Master put it in other terms, "Simon, do not disturb yourself about the woman. Turn your mind toward yourself. You are too cold-blooded, too ceremonious. The woman is better than you suppose. With all her sins I can see that she has the loving spirit. But Simon, though you invited me to your house, you did not bring the water to wash my feet. You did not give me the customary kiss of welcome. You had no oil to pour on my head. But wherein you fell short, the woman was kinder. She washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head." That was a gentle rebuke to Simon. Every word of praise for the woman was reproof for the pharisaical Simon.

What the Lord was doing that day was all for the best. Men need the open light of truth, and it is good for them to see themselves as they are to enable them to repent of their errors. Let there be truth, then, though it be a scourge for indifference, and a censure for all shortcomings.

But it is well to consider how gracious was the Master's bearing toward the woman. Though He cannot put aside her past, His expression to her is kindness and tenderness. It is not hard to picture the love light that was gleaming from His eyes when He pronounced her sins forgiven.

He who so readily recognized the love spirit was Himself the incarnation of love. All who entered into His presence felt this instinctively. It was not needful to await the spoken word, for love cannot be concealed. It reveals itself in the affec-

tionate glance and in the softened tone, whose every cadence is a caress.

It is such reality of love that touches the wayward heart. When in the home some favored son goes wild, in nine cases out of ten he will conceal his fault from the father, and when he opens his heart, if at all, it will be to the mother. The secret for this is not hard to find. The father represents rectitude, the straight line, the straight walk, the severity of the law. The mother represents tenderness and helpfulness. The father resents the stain that has been put upon the family name; but the mother thinks more of leading her boy back to the right path. The father stands for the letter of the law, the mother for the outreaching mercy of the Gospel. And so the boy comes and sits down with mother and they talk it over. She listens to his confession. She tells him that he has acted very wrong, but that she loves him and hopes for him and will help him still. And the sweetness of that mother love lifts the soul of that boy to gratitude and repentance. And such mother love, one of the most precious of all earthly gifts, is a teacher of the Lord's love, and of the Lord's novel way with the sinner.

There is another instance in the case of the woman of Samaria who met Jesus at the well. The disciples were averse to His having any speech with her, for they were agreed as to her being a sinner. If they could have acted at their own pleasure, they would have despatched her about her business in short order. But Christ looked deeper and saw the chance of another soul to be saved for the Kingdom. So He sat and talked

with her and as they chatted there together He won her confidence. When she went home she told her neighbors about the Master, and they became interested, and Philip was sent for, and out of it all there came in due time the church in Samaria.

So Christ showed a novel way with Zacchaeus. We can hardly call him a sinner, but the Jews had no liking for him, and because of his business connections they set him quite outside their society and their sympathies. If Luke had known such a word when he was writing his Gospel, he would have said that the Jews had laid a boycott on Zacchaeus. When Christ saw that he was desolate, and alone, and sorrowful, He addressed him in the friendliest way, and honored him by telling him that He was coming to dine at his house.

Under the influence of such instances and examples the Christian of to-day may conclude, while he is to be frank and honest in his hostility to sin, that he still should be kind and hopeful and affectionate with persons who are not yet Christians, and also with any who have fallen in the way of temptation. Too many of us permit ourselves to become discouraged in our Christian work. When we start in to interest a friend in religion, if we fail to receive immediately the encouraging response, our pride is wounded and we throw up the task as hopeless.

Christ is the teacher of perseverance in a good cause, and of the profit of winsomeness that simply refuses to be denied. In the quest for souls we should be as importunate as the commercial traveler who is determined to sell his goods, or as

the life insurance man who camps out on your doorstep till he sells you his policy. If the friend we are striving for has some stain on his record, that is all the better reason for patience and the tender entreaty. Somewhere, somehow, there is an open door to that soul, and ours is the duty to find that door.

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace may restore."

In the Scripture we have the record of Saul, a most discouraging case. He was a hater of the light, a persecutor of Jesus, a destroyer of Christians. But the Redeemer came to his heart, and when he was won he became the foremost champion of the cross.

In South Africa there lived a native chief, Africaner, the head of the tribe of the Namaquas, who was such a valiant fighter, such a military genius, that he was called the Napoleon of that region. At the head of his armies he carried fire and destruction for hundreds of miles and he made his name a terror everywhere. One of the missionaries said of him that he was "a monster, whom neither religion nor government can restrain or subdue," and so a force of soldiers was sent to rid the country of such a plague. And yet when that savage chief heard the story of the loving Christ, he was transformed and became a consistent Christian, a character which he sustained as long as he lived.

Out in the Mississippi Valley there lived a man who for twenty-five years was a gambler and blackleg. He was taught to gamble when he was seven years old. For the twenty-five years that

he was a professional gambler, he indulged in all manner of gentlemanly vices, as they were termed in that period. He had an interest in two faro banks in the city of Louisville, which brought him in fifteen hundred dollars a month. He reckoned on that income securely, for the odds in a gambling place are always in favor of the bank. This man was invited one day by a minister of the gospel to come and hear him preach.

"But, Sir," said he, "I am a gambler."

The minister put his hand tenderly on his shoulder and replied, "My brother, I hope that meeting may be a blessing to both of us. Come down and hear me preach."

He went to the meeting. He heard the message of saving grace, and that night he yielded his heart to the Savior. In his new life he suffered many drawbacks and tribulations, but he overcame them all and ultimately became a preacher of the Gospel himself.

Work like that is work for the Master. It pays the best of dividends, for the reward is everlasting. It is a comfortable work, for it is making the world a better place to live in. And it is a joyful work, for it insures the smile of the redeeming Lord, who Himself loved to save sinners.

THE PEACEMAKER

VI.

THE PEACEMAKER

THERE is one God; one, no less; one, no more; this is the solid truth, the bed rock foundation of true religion. It is One God, no less; for man is not to worship nothing. If God is not, there can be no religion. We speak the voice of prayer, because we know that the heavens are not brass. The throne of the universe is not void. God is, and He can help us, and that right early.

There is one God and no more. More than one God, more than one supreme Ruler, would involve contradiction. With ten equal sovereigns, or five, how could any one of them be supreme? In every Jewish household of the olden time one of the first things to be taught the children, and the very first thing that the father uttered as he rose to greet the new day, was the word, *"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord;"* and in this expression Judaism was right against an idolatrous world. For to admit of there being more than one God would be to suggest conflict of jurisdiction, a conflict in administration as well as in the fundamental law. Were there to be several Gods, who could be certain which of them was his own God. In such a condition the man would be in constant doubt as to which sovereignty he was bound to acknowledge. Then, too, a plurality of Gods would

carry with it an unsettlement of the absolute righteousness. Already we have too many standards of piety. This man and that sets up his own view of what is right. As old Cecil put the thought, "We erect the idol self; and not only wish others to worship, but worship it ourselves." It is a relief to be assured that back of all there is one unchangeable standard; that One God sways the universal sceptre. Here all Christianity is agreed. Christians may debate the mode of the Divine existence, but they concur in teaching that there is just One God and one righteousness.

But the doctrine of the Unity of God is at the foundation of religion; it is not the temple of religion itself. The Christian revelation is on a higher plane than Judaism. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews shows this incontestably in that glowing passage, in which he contrasts the Christian's privilege with the aloofness and sombreness of the Old Covenant. What a picture is that of the Mount which might not be touched and which burned with fire! How gloomy and forbidding all that darkness and blackness and tempest! As we peruse that old Law to-day as written in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, with all the centuries intervening, we still hear the awful thunderings of Sinai, and almost feel the quaking of the ground underfoot. God to the Israelites was afar off, and to be worshiped with fear and trembling, since He was

> "Armed with omnipotence to save,
> Or crush man in the dust."

It is the Christian who has the more glorious prospect, for he comes to Mount Zion, to the City

of the Living God, to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born. And as the fitting climax of his message, at the summit of his ecstatic flight, where his thought seems to pierce the very heavens, he points out the crowning gift, the excelling blessing of the Christian's hope, in the approach to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenent. This is the thought which renders our Christian worship such a delight, that Christ walks with men, that Christ sweeps away the clouds and fears and misconceptions which have intervened between the True God and His children, and that He has taught the heart of trustful infancy and of trembling age alike to say, "Our Father," with the certainty that the great God loves us all more tenderly than can be experienced in intercourse with earthly fatherhood.

Christianity teaches of God and of the Mediator between God and man: or as Paul states it in the Corinthian epistle, *"To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* (1 Cor. 8: 6). To this he adds, perchance with a touch of unconscious humor, *"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge."* This is the light and the truth, Christ coming to the earth from heaven; Christ lifting the burdens from the weak, comforting the bosom of despair and extending the royal hope of salvation.

Christ's mission to the earth includes the service of mediation. Six several times the word "Medi-

ator" is employed in the New Testament, and always in association with the life and work of Jesus. The word implies the idea of negotiation, of standing between, the settlement of differences, the making of peace. The United States ambassador at a foreign court, who is empowered to represent his government in treating affairs of state and in keeping both nations in peace and amity with each other, is a mediator, a peacemaker.

Joseph's brethren in Egypt fell into difficulty because of the money which was found in their sacks, and especially because of the Governor's silver cup which was in Benjamin's sack. Although they were well on their journey homeward they returned in haste. When they arrived they appealed to Joseph's steward to intercede with the Governor in their behalf. In the act they were making the steward a mediator, a peacemaker, between themselves and the man, who next under Pharaoh, was lord of all Egypt.

In like maner also, when Saul the king was so enraged with David that he was trying to kill him, David engaged Jonathan to advise him how matters were coming on in the court, and to help him if possible in securing a composition with the king.

Connected with the idea of mediation, of peacemaking, there are several necessary conditions:

1. Mediation suggests separation, a division between two parties, who for the time being are in disagreement. We have a familiar adage to the effect that "It takes two to make a quarrel." By the same token it takes two to mend the quarrel.

2. Mediation suggests that between the two

principal parties there must be a measure of independence. When our national government sends its commissioners to treat with an Indian tribe, which still maintains its tribal organization, it recognizes that tribe's virtual sovereignty. These Indians are weak. If it seemed necessary our army could force them to any course that the government desired. But in fact the government makes engagements with their chiefs, and solemnizes treaties with them, under all the formalities that are employed in intercourse with a sovereign state.

In like manner Jesus, who comes to negotiate with man, recognizes the dignity of humanity. He acknowledges man's freedom of choice and action. It is within man's power to obey God or to disobey, to accept or to reject the tender of Divine mercy. If he wills so to do he may serve God with all the faithfulness of faithful Abraham, or he may flout the Divine purpose with all the audacity of an Absalom or a Herod. In either instance heaven will not lift the sceptre of coercion. Man is to be urged and entreated. The minister of religion is to employ the accents of invitation. So Paul explained to the Corinthians, *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* (2 Cor. 5:20).

3. Mediation implies further an estrangement. There was no need for peacemaking with Enoch, who walked with God; nor with Elijah, who at Horeb hearkened to the still, small voice. There is no need of intercession for the child that leans upon its father's bosom, and who responds to his

lightest word. It is only when the wire of sympathy has been broken that some one must be despatched to renew the connection, so that the messages of love may flow unrestricted from heart to heart. When the prodigal has deserted the home to wander in the far country of folly and sin it is time to send the messenger, bearing the earnest plea for him to put away his riotings and return to the father's house.

4. Then also mediation presupposes the wonderful love of God. For the movement toward reconciliation begins with God. So the apostle John declared when he pointed out that *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* (1 John 4:10). In this respect the Divine government is unique. Our human administrations bolster themselves up by the weakness of dignity. Their pride is easily wounded, and the hurt is slow of healing. In court the judge on the bench resents so much as a gesture of disrespect, and contempt of court renders the offender liable to a jail sentence. And we are prone to nurse grudges and resentments. A friend hurts our feelings by some hasty word or act and we cross his name from our books. We have the Indian's memory for slights, and his passion for revenge. Social usage as well as the law forbids resort to the tomahawk in return for an injury, whether real or imagined, but there is no penalty for the subtle sense of satisfaction at hearing that the man with whom we are at variance in not getting on well in the world. How miserable, how wicked such encouragement of animosity! There is no

room for that in connection with the Gospel. *"How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"* asks Peter of the Lord, and Christ replies, *"I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but until seventy times seven."* (Matt. 18:21, 22). And God's standard for the Divine forgiveness is still higher than that. For God harbors no revenges, but is full of long suffering and tender mercy. No loves that we know are comparable to His. God's love welcomes back to the fold the Peter who has denied the Master with curses and oaths; it has place for a Saul who has been a grievous persecutor of the church, and it reaches out to every lost sinner the hope of repentance and renewal of favor with God. No such forbearance is to be had elsewhere. As Lowell so truly sings,

> " 'Tis heaven alone that is given away:
> 'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

The Mediator, the Peacemaker, who descends bringing God's message of reconciliation is qualified at all points for his duty.

He is robed with absolute power. His credentials supersede every envoy who came before Him, and He stands before us as the sole, the only negociator through whom the Divine favor may come. This was what Peter declared to the High Priest and the assembled elders in their high court in Jerusalem, when speaking of Jesus, he said, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12). This consideration of Christ's absolute authority in the work of salvation is of prime importance.

In all transactions of moment we prefer to deal with principals rather than with subordinates. The soul is eager to know the terms which are ultimate and reliable. In the matter of the soul's destiny no man can afford the possibility of mistake or misapprehension. As to this there is a general conviction that if any fail of the Kingdom, none can fail who follow Jesus. Praise if you will a Socrates, the searcher for truth; honor if you will a Mohammed, whom you may name the sunlight for a darkened day; applaud if you will a Swedenborg, that man of keen vision and massive brain, but however you may rank them, and all the other leaders of religious thought, still it is Jesus who surpasses them all. Where they agree with Jesus we commend them. But the standard of truth unalloyed is in His hands.

Christ in His office as Mediator and Peacemaker enjoys the special qualification of His exalted humanity. When two are separated by their ignorance each of the other's language they must seek an interpreter who is master of the speech of both. The bridge which is built for crossing a stream must be long enough to reach the bank on either side. Even if it be built three-quarters of the way, unless it is completed for the rest of the distance it is as useless as no bridge at all. So our Mediator, our Peacemaker, who on the Divine side is in full touch with God, must also on the human side hold the full confidence and sympathy of man. Consequently Christ took upon Him our nature. He represents to us the universal man, the surpassing man, the perfect type, of which we are such imperfect variations. In His magnifi-

cent discourse on the resurrection Paul alludes to this higher humanity of Jesus, naming Him as The Second Adam, and defining his position in the pertinent passage, *"The first man is of the earth earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven."* (1 Cor. 15: 47). As the supreme man Christ wins our hearts. He is one with us: He is one of us. His earthly life was no pretence, as was taught in the Gnostic heresy. His tears were real. When we suffer hunger we remember that Christ hungered. If we are troubled, deep darkness fell upon His spirit in the Garden. As we behold Him bearing our sorrows and bending under the weight of the cross, our spirit reaches up toward His.

"The Son of Man in tears,
The wondering angels see.
Be thou astonished, O my soul,
He shed those tears for thee."

There is power in the gospel of suffering. Those who have understood it best, the Pauls, the Peters, the Luthers, the Wesleys, the Moodys, have thrust all lesser things behind them and have gone forth to teach and preach of Jesus.

Christ as Mediator, as Peacemaker, came to compose the estrangement between man and his Maker. Care should be exercised here to avoid a serious misapprehension. If trouble arises between two who have been friends on the earth, the peacemaker who interposes will seek to bring both to a change of spirit. He will assume that in all probability both of them have been more or less at fault. So he seeks to make compromises, and begs that each shall yield somewhat of his rights, and forget some of his grievances. How

far may such an analogy apply in the mediatorial work of Christ? Can it be assumed that the Savior's mission was to reconcile man to God and God to man? The first half of the postulate may be admitted: the second half must be denied. We consent to the proposition that Christ came to reconcile man to God. To succeed in the task required that man should be changed, changed in his pursuits, changed in his associations, changed in his affections. Reconciling man to God involved a new creation, the making a new man, created after God in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:24).

But reconciling God to man would require a change in the Infinite Being. And if God were to be changed, in what respect could He be changed? Could He be changed in His affections? But God had been loving the sinner before. The reconciling work began with God, who sent His Son into the world to save sinners because He loved them. For God to change in His affections would be to turn His love for sinners into hatred, and not even the worst among sinners could desire such a change in God as that. Could God change in His infinite righteousness? Surely not. Change in God's righteousness would be to transform virtue to vice, and that would be absurdly impossible. Where then could there be any change in God? Could it be in His attitude toward sin? But that attitude of God in abominating sin is altogether right and just. God must continue to hate sin, and we could not conceive of Him as God and as not hating sin. So it would seem that God was not to change at all. Nothing in the mediatorial work of

Christ is to be construed as attempting to alter the divine law, the divine purpose, or the divine affections. The gospel cannot make compromise, and it yields nothing on the part of God, nothing that is essential to the strength or the glory of the divine government. The work of reconciliation is to be confined to making alterations in man, in changing him and his whole course of living. And this work is accomplished when the wanderer seeks after God and has become reconciled to God.

Christ's work as Mediator, as the Divine Peacemaker, began with His proclamation of the truth. Much of human errancy has its source in misbeliefs and misconception of values. When men think of God as harsh and wrathful and tyrannical, as dealing out pain and destruction by wholesale, the tendency is not to draw them to God, but rather the reverse, to drive them farther away. When they set an exaggerated estimate on pleasure or wealth, so that these seem to them to be the supreme good, they will have little room left for a wholesome idea of their duty to God. So long as they regard the incidentals of religion, such as fastings, and the fringes on the garments, and the phylacteries of the Pharisees as the main thing, they will keep right on in their old way and neglect the weightier matters of the law. But Jesus in His intimate speech with the people and His disciples cleared the air of all these miasms, both mental and moral. He showed them that the God of all grace was infinite in love and compassion, and was planning good, and nothing but good, for all His earthly children. He taught them how empty and vain were all their pleasures, and

all their trust in riches, which the moth could corrupt, or the thief could steal. And then as to worship, He showed them how the simple faith of the child, and the penitent prayer of the publican, and the worship of the humblest disciple, who turned his face up to God in spirit and in truth, were acceptable always to the Father.

Christ's work as Mediator and Peacemaker continues in the power of His matchless example. As He walked with men, He was the incarnation of goodness, purity, kindness, and helpfulness. To sit at His feet was to drink in inspiration to nobler thought and more loyal conduct. To be in His company was to share His love for the right and his instinctive shrinking from even the suggestion of wrong. And this bad, mad world was in need of such an inspiring pattern of holiness. The good example is a teacher in a double way. It sets the copy for imitation. It brings the desirable standard directly before the eye. "Out of sight, out of mind," is an adage which would counsel keeping the best, the noblest, the truest in the range of constant vision. Then for the next influence there is emulation, the desire to possess in one's self what is so eminently desirable. We have seen children at their play, and how in their play the younger ones are learning of the elder children. The process is not in much telling, but in the unstudied attempts of the smaller person to speak and act like the others. In this manner they acquire the better speech, the freer movement of the limbs, and the clearer notion of things about them, and their several relations. A holy man once wrote a valuable book which he called "The

Imitation of Christ." It is a book of meditations on Jesus and exhortations to follow Him. Of a truth such imitation of Christ is a wonderful factor in lifting man upward and bringing him back to God.

Christ as Mediator and Peacemaker helps to make peace through His all-conquering love. Of this it may be said that no such love was ever seen in this world before. We have been told of beautiful instances of parental and filial love; of fathers and mothers giving their all for their children, and children doing the like for their parents. And there have been most admirable expressions of loyalty and faithfulness of men to other men and to their country. But in all of these, even in those which were most memorable, there has been an element of narrowness. But with the Christ love there is no narrowness. It has been all-embracing, including the lovely and the unlovely, the good and the bad, the friend and the enemy; in short, it loves all, and everybody of every rank, and tribe, and nation, so that there is not a soul anywhere but that the love of Christ flows toward it in sustaining power and blessing. And such love, so pure and holy, rouses the return spirit of love in man. And as men began to love the lovely in Christ they saw more to love in each other. They began to experience a love for God's gracious purposes, and so their hearts were transformed, and they came into closer sympathy with all things divine.

But the crowning work of Christ as Mediator and Peacemaker was in the glory of His sacrifice. When at night we observe the blazing orbs which

overspread the sky like precious jewels broidered on the mantle of omnipotence, we note that they seem fixed and motionless, and yet the astronomer will say that all our solar system—the sun, the planets and their attendant satellites—are rushing with inconceivable velocity toward a greater central sun. And so we follow Jesus as He went about in Palestine, with all His wanderings, with all His pauses here and there, and with His journeys as they were again resumed, we may see that He had one fixed and predetermined direction of motion, that which points toward Calvary and its atoning sacrifice. All through His addresses to the people and to the disciples we trace intimations of His approaching suffering, and of the death by which He should glorify God. Hear Him in that last week of His ministry say, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* (John 12:32). Lifted up! Yes, crucified! And yet that cross from that passover day has been drawing men out of their selfishness, out of their morbidness, out of their sins, to Jesus. Beholding His supreme sacrifice, they have crucified their raging passions and evil desires and designs. They have laid their all on the altar of consecration. They have consented to be poor, to be persecuted, to be martyred for Christ's sake. It has been the partnership of the cross which has drawn sinners to put away their sins and confess their Savior; which has induced faithful missionaries to travel to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Gospel to the heathen, and which has erected all these Christian churches and institutions, to which the present progress and civilization of the world is due.

And the Christ who has wrought all these amazing transformations in individuals and in world customs and institutions, has in countless ways been bringing peace to the nations and to the individual soul.

Blessed are they who have heard His voice, and who in consequence are able to say with the apostle, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Rom. 5:1).

THE UPLIFTED VEIL

VII.

THE UPLIFTED VEIL

THREE of the Evangelists, Matthew in his sixteenth chapter, Mark in his eighth, and Luke in his ninth, concur in presenting Jesus' discourse to the disciples on the value of the soul life, in which He declared the soul life to be all, while that of the body compared with it was as nothing. *"For what,"* so said He in conclusion, *"is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"* The soul of man, unseen, untangible, immaterial, which cannot be weighed in your balances, which none of your scientific contrivances can uncover, nevertheless out-weighs the universe. Because of this immeasurable valuation of the soul, the life of the body is to be restrained, the cross is to be lifted, and Christ is to be followed in His great work of saving mercy.

It may well be suspected that this speech of cross-bearing fell upon heavy ears. Those disciples were more of the pattern of ourselves than we commonly imagine. We are to understand at the time of our Lord's address that they were no more ready to take up the cross to live or die for the Master than any dozen of our average church members, who are moderately religious and who take such precious good care not to become too religious. It is much the part of human nature to applaud the heroism of the martyrs and to hang

floral wreaths upon the shrines of their pious sacrifice, and at the same time to scurry to a safe distance from the chance of wearing the martyr crown for one's self. Those half tutored disciples, who had not yet experienced the baptism of a perfect love strengthened by trial, shrunk and faltered at that word of Jesus, *"Let him deny himself."* In their deepest souls they questioned the meaning of His words, and when they met together by twos or threes, in moments when they thought themselves unobserved, they were apt to exchange their misgivings and their doubts as to their ability to meet the Master's will. And even when they were all assembled and sitting at the Master's feet, in all likelihood they were troubled and heavy-hearted. That was a hard saying, indubitably hard, and who was able to bear it? that word, *"Let him deny himself."*

All this shrinking and self-questioning the Master saw. As for that, what is there that He does not see? If some poor woman in the thick of the crowd touched but the hem of His garment, He knew it without anybody telling. If some envious Pharisee caviled at his discourse, though not so much as a syllable of it was breathed aloud, though the beating of the man's heart was more audible than that silent murmur, yet the Savior heard and answered the unspoken challenge. And to-day there is not a heart-throb of anguish under the spreading sky, not a moan of grief over the grave of a buried love, not a sigh of distress for a misguided step or a purpose unattained, but our Lord sees it and knows it altogether. With the same Christ love that impelled Him to replen-

ish the wine at the marriage feast in Cana, or to summon Lazarus from the tomb in Bethany, He observed His disciples' discontent and made ready to extend them consolation.

But it is to be noticed, as the evangelists report these affairs, that the Lord did not comfort them immediately, nor possibly in the manner that they would have chosen, had the opportunity of choice been given them. Heaven has a way of governing its concerns according to its own plans, some of which, to our impatient sense, are over long in fulfilment. We seldom make due allowance for the formative effects of time. If we discover some blatant offender engaged in sowing the seeds of error, as was the case with James and John while they were students in theology, we take up the cry with them, *"O Lord, call down the fire from heaven."* But the Lord does not call down the fire, and the tares keep growing up so that we see them every day. But the good wheat grows up also, and by and by we realize that the Kingdom has no need to consume what must soon be dying out of itself. Some great sorrow befalls. It is crushing, over-powering. We feel that our grief is greater than we can bear. We cry, *"O Lord, how long?"* But we hear no response, and it seems as if the sun had perished from our sky, and that we could never be able to smile again. But afterward we found that the sorrow did not so much crush as refine us. It strengthened our moral fiber. It quickened our powers of sympathy. It made us better and more useful to those about us.

Possibly we are too much inclined to impatience. There was once a young man in school, who was

fitting himself to engage in the foreign field as a missionary. He was planning to go out to Africa or to India. And he wrote me a letter in which he betrayed great anxiety of spirit. He felt if he remained in school to complete the full course it would be a long time to wait, and so he wrote me with the evident hope that I would counsel him to drop his books and at once take up the task of saving souls. But for the life of me I could not reply according to his wish. Doubtless God had a work for that ardent young man, but the Almighty would hardly welcome his coming before he was fully prepared for the arduous service. Can we not remember how Paul with all his riches of rabbinical learning had to spend three good years after he was converted outside of Damascus in making himself ready to preach the gospel? The young ministers will do well to secure all the information possible before entering upon the task of dealing with the heathen, since the man who knows will always have the advantage of the other whose zeal outruns his discretion.

It would be an advantage if there were a more general perception, I will not say of the Divine procrastination, but of the Divine deliberation. God moves, but it is at the time of His own appointment. If His movements seem unduly tedious to our restless spirits, we may be sure that the hour which He sets will be the best in every way. Israel was in bondage for years and years while God was raising up Moses for their deliverance. Had Moses launched the exodus of his nation the year that he smote the Egyptian, the

whole movement would have been a dismal and an untimely catastrophe.

We may well reflect on the lost world that was waiting for the advent of the Messiah. What long centuries unrolled while the world far and wide was sitting in gross darkness. And yet only when the fulness of times was come was he born in Bethlehem. And even then what long years of waiting there were, the years of infancy, the years of adolescence, the years of manhood, until he was the full thirty years of age. And so it need never astonish us when we meet with delay in our appeals for Divine assistance. It is not for man's best good that his prayers should be sight-drafts on the bank of eternal mercy, the creature ordering up the Creator. Heaven reserves some of its rights and prerogatives. Man is to pray, but he is to tarry for God's answer till it shall please God to send the answer. Restlessness on the part of the suppliant cannot hasten the orderly procedures of Divine providence, nor can any opposition of the human arm avail to withstand its progress.

Now, in the Lord's own time, while His disciples were brooding over the question of self-denials and cross-bearing, was the seven days which we term a week. All that time he allowed them to ponder and murmur and to grow anxious over the prospect of the trials and privations which they might have to face, and for the whole week He did not stir to ease their uncertainty. They were to wait and endure till they had learned to some extent the significance of sacrifice, and of the relief that comes when care is lifted from the aching heart.

Finally, when the Lord was ready to give them relief, it was not as one might suppose, by toning down or explaining away his former instruction, or even by telling them that they had been borrowing troubles which they might never be called on to experience. Far from that, He fortifies them for more strenuous service by giving them a manifestation of His glory, which hitherto had been held latent. With this intent He selects three of the disciples, those of the most prominence in the company, the men whose fears if continued would be the most mischievous, and whose cheerful confidence would lend buoyancy of spirit to the others, and led them apart into a mountain to pray. What mountain this was is not determined with certainty. Some writers have concluded that it was Mt. Tabor, and for this reason they have called that eminence "The Holy Mount," but the objection to this view is no less than the fact that at this period Tabor was fortified with bastions and a redout, and was garrisoned with a band of Roman soldiers. We can hardly suppose that our Lord would seek a praying place close beside a camp of roystering legionaries. A more probable suggestion would be some site to the north of Caesarea Philippi, in the hill district of Mt. Hermon. As to the positive location, like the grave of Moses, no man knoweth it to this day.

But it is the main facts that we desire and the evangelists place them before us in detail. Jesus, with Peter, James and John, proceeded to the hill region, and there in the silence of nature the Savior bowed with His companions in prayer. There He lifted His voice in intimate converse with the

Father, with your Father, with our Father. It delights us to reflect upon Jesus as engaging in prayer. Prayer, it is the sublimest uplifting of the soul in fervent devotion. It is the link that binds our helpless sinful earth to the skies. It is the very speech of the angels who kneel about the throne. It is the voice that enlists omnipotence for the rescue of human weakness. It is the key that throws back the bolts of paradise.

> Prayer is the simplest form of speech
> That infant lips can try;
> Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
> The Majesty on high.

It would be well for men to remember the lesson they learned at their mother's knee, when she taught them never to retire to repose till they had breathed out the evening petition to the All-Father. Only when the soul has reached the satisfaction of its every desire can it discard the attitude and the voice of prayer. Only when it has no inclination for betterment in life and purpose, only when it cares nothing for communion with God, only when it chooses to live like the beast and die the death of the beast, can it afford to cease to pray. But the pure and the holy pray. Livingstone in the heart of Darkest Africa made supplication to God. Stanley when he was searching to find Livingstone found that he must pray. Marshal Foch in command of the allied armies that were facing toward Berlin spent half an hour daily in prayer. Washington, when his soldiers at Valley Forge streaked the snows with bleeding feet, and often clustered in their winter quarters suffering from shortage of food, retired into the thicket to

pray. Abraham Lincoln, when the strife was hot, and the tidings from the front were disheartening, went into his closet to pray. And Jesus prayed. When we behold Him praying in the wilderness, or talking with God on the mountain side, we may realize that no man, however exalted his station, or however distinguished he may be for wisdom or goodness, can rise above the need and comfort of prayer.

But as Jesus prayed in the seclusion of the mountain He became Himself. Hitherto He had veen veiling His divinity in the body of humanity. He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, while in fact He was King of kings. He had been the babe on the bosom of Mary, the child with the children in Egypt, the young carpenter plying Joseph's trade in Nazareth, and the teacher instructing His disciples and called Rabbi by the people. All this time the human nature had been concealing the divine nature from over-curious eyes. But now, while in the spirit and the attitude of prayer, the Divine nature shone out through the human nature, as the flame of the lighted lamp shines out through the translucent globe. For the moment the spirit is dominant over the flesh, spirit is radiant through the flesh. His very form and countenance are altered, are transfigured, and His raiment glows white and glistening with the illumination of Heaven, and became as it might look to angelic eyes.

But this was not all. For two effulgent ones stood with Him, two heroes and representatives of the ancient time—Moses and Elias—Elias who had mounted to glory in a chariot of flame; and

Moses, who at the building of the tabernacle, and the giving forth of the law, had talked with God face to face. What an awe must have affected Peter and James and John at such a sight, and at hearing Moses and Elias consulting with Jesus about the death which He must presently accomplish at Jerusalem. All this was profitable for faith, and yet it was not enough. The Lord would not permit the three to hold in their hearts the shadow of a doubt concerning His origin and essential nature, and so the heavens were made to speak. A cloud descended as at Mount Sinai of old. From the depths of the cloud the disciples heard the voice that talked with Adam in Eden. It spoke in the plainest of tones, saying, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* Hearing that voice, the disciples were overcome and fell prostrate with faces toward the ground. And they did not stir again till the Master roused them with a touch. As they went down the mountain the Lord sealed their lips with the direction that they should tell no man till the Son of Man was risen from the dead.

We may well believe that those disciples came from the mountain with all their fears scattered to the winds. Other fears might beset them in the future, but for the present all were dispelled; and when at some later moment others might rise, the memory of this experience would suffice to allay them. If the Lord had not withdrawn His speech about bearing the cross, He had supplied an incentive for cross-bearing that was to make every affliction light and every trial a joy.

This Mount of Transfiguration affords us a graphic object lesson respecting the Divine method. We might be led to think that whatever the Lord bade His disciples they should have trusted Him; that if their faith were worthy it should have conquered every doubt, and that the kind of loyalty that demanded a miracle to support it was not worth supporting. But we can be thankful that God does not so view the matter. The faith that God requires is to rest upon good judgment and always shows that it rests upon a substantial basis. We are to hold the truths of the Gospel and to follow the Christian life because of sound proofs and logical reasons.

All this life of faith proceeds upon accepted business principles, the principles which we are practicing every day. You may wish fifty dollars from the bank and you go there and offer a check for that amount. The teller or the cashier scrutinizes the check, which is a neat piece of paper, ornamented with printing and sundry pen scratches. When the bank official has satisfied himself that it is all right he counts you out the fifty dollars that you called for. On what grounds does he cash you the check? Is it because the check is standard money? Not so, for it is not money. Is it because you have asked him for the money? No indeed, for he is not paying out money on polite invitations. Why he cashes the check is because he accepts the signature as genuine, and because he believes that the man who wrote the signature is good for the amount, and that you who have endorsed it are good for the amount also. In that business transaction there was large

room for the exercise of faith, but the faith had good grounds for its trust.

In similar manner a father is to have faith in his son, not because he happens to be his son, but because he has shown himself a true son by heeding the parental counsel and by conducting himself generally as a true son should.

And so a wife is to have faith in her husband, not because she has given her hand in lawful marriage, but because he has proven himself faithful and devoted and in every way worthy of her confidence.

And such is the divine method, to win the confidence of men by presentation of evidence. The Lord did not ask men to believe in Him because He said that He had come down from Heaven. On the contrary He said on one occasion, *"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."* (1 John 5:31). His complaint against the Pharisees did not lie in their disregard for His statements concerning Himself, but because after He had done before them the works that no one ever, they still remained captious and unbelieving. He had taught them truths so precious that they stood forth as the veritable truths of heaven. He had wrought the most convincing miracles. For such reasons it was their duty to accept and believe Him. Now when His disciples were disheartened He had cheered them by unveiling His glory on the mount.

Here we have instruction that may not be slighted or ignored. Whoever desires the confidence of his fellows should furnish good grounds for confidence. A good character well maintained

secures approbation. As one is kind to others, as he is true in every relation, as his word is better than many another's bond, he will have no trouble in winning trust and good-will. Somehow as the world goes men reach the level of their deserving. Even those who have been unfortunate enough to slip into some error or mistake can live down the mishap and establish a fresh reputation.

The Mount of Transfiguration carries a lesson respecting the after-life of the soul. Here we face a great mystery. When our friends leave us at death and pass on into the other world we wonder as to their direction and their destiny. Some who pause on the brink of the unknown are hopeless. They know the earth and its works, but they are not so sure about Heaven. And they are so accustomed to this mortal body, to these hands and feet of flesh, and to all that goes to the make-up of the mortal body, that they find it impossible to conceive of any existence without these accessories, or without the actual substance of the material body. Some journey on this track to such degree that they regard flesh and blood a necessity of the life of the hereafter, just as they are a necessity in the present life; and so they settle it that when the body dies all that there is of the man dies with it, and all that there is of him goes into the tomb, and with that they declare that there can never be any life for him, not any existence for him, till some far-off future, when the soul and the body together will be rescued from the embrace of the grave and resuscitated for the life of glory. This scene of Christ's transfiguration helps us to reach the truth respecting such a philosophy of materialism.

Here in the Mount we have seen Moses and Elias conversing with Jesus. But Elias had left the world nine centuries before this occurrence, and Moses had bidden farewell to the Israelitish host in the land of Moab fourteen centuries before. Yet here Moses and Elias live and speak with Jesus. Does that support the view that soul and body go into the grave together? Does that seem as if the soul of Moses was reposing with his body in that Moabitish grave, there to await the trump of the resurrection morn? We are informed that Solomon was wise, and he was wise enough to draw a firm distinction between the essential man and the body in which the essential man has his temporary dwelling while he is here on the earth. For speaking of death and its changes he declared, *"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit unto God who gave it."* (Eccl. 12: 7). But if the spirit returns unto God, it can be only the living spirit. And in the presence of God all spirits are of this order, living and clothed with a spiritual body, without any taint of the earthly body, as they serve before God in the excellent glory.

And Jesus gives us the like testimony as to the condition of the soul which follows this change which we call death. It is a wonderful thing to have Jesus as the interpreter of Scripture, and whenever He opens the page of the law or the prophecy we men of the earth should be intent with open ear and the open mind. Now for generations the Jews had been quoting a passage from the Old Testament, which they imagined had for its chief content the assertion of God as the special

protecter and guardian of their ancestors. But there was much more to the passage than that, and so one day our Lord called it up and gave it a fresh exposition. As might be expected His interpretation floods the passage with a gleam of heavenly radiance. Hear Him say, *"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?"* And from that He went on to give the illuminating comment, *"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."* That expression, *"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,"* uttered in this conection can mean nothing less than at that moment Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were not lying asleep in the grave, but were living, sentient beings; existing somewhere in God's house for the faithful; possibly not having reached as yet their highest possibilities of glory, but certainly participating in the joys of the celestial paradise. And if that can be said truly of Abraham and the patriarchs, it can also be said of all the faithful of God who have gone on before us, that they are living and awaiting our coming when the days are done which God gives us for our better preparation for the upper sanctuary.

The Transfiguration speaks with eloquent voice of Christ's divinity and sovereignty. It is a rebuke to all the cavilers who so readily grant Him primacy as a teacher, but controvert His authority as Savior and Son of God. When we heed the testimony of Scripture, we are taught that Jesus is the Christ, the everlasting Son of the Father.

He is consubstantial with the Father, so much so that the one apostle who knew Him the most intimately declares, *"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."* (1 John 2:23). How the human and the divine are associated in Jesus, and how the human nature could at one time conceal the divine nature, and how again the human nature could become translucent, so that the divine nature could shine through and glorify it, it is not necessary for us to comprehend. There is much that we do not profess to comprehend. We know that the blades of grass grow, but we do not know how it is that the vitality in the seed can overcome the deadness of the soil about it, and draw from that soil its life and substance; but we accept the facts of that marvel of nature. The sun shines. We know it very well, but we do not comprehend how it shines and gives life to all the earth, although we do have some very ingenious explanations of the possibilities in the case. But the sun will still shine on whether we comprehend its mysterious workings, or neglect them altogether.

As for the truth of the union of the human and the divine in Jesus, we may receive it on the authority of the Scripture, whether we comprehend it or otherwise. When some one asked Daniel Webster if he understood it, he frankly admitted that he did not, and from that he went on to remark that he did not expect to comprehend a Savior who was worthy of human adoration. As for the testimony of the fact of such union of the human and the divine in Jesus, the New Testament is full of it from beginning to end, both in

the way of definite statements and in implied allusions. He declared for Himself that He came down from heaven. Angels proclaimed His heavenly mission. Celestial voices at His baptism and in the Holy Mount confirm the assurance. Every miracle that He wrought attests the claim. But if all the other evidences were to be dismissed as inadequate, the transfiguration should be convincing enough. After that experience He might descend from the Mount to resume His teaching and preaching, and even suffer Himself to be crucified without resistance; but the memory of that radiant presence on the mountain could not be forgotten. Long years after Peter employed this incident to confirm the faith of the church by his word, *"We were eyewitnesses of his majesty in the holy mount,"* and *"This voice which came from heaven we heard."* (2 Pet. 1: 16, 18).

But the transfiguration teaches us something of the beatification of the heavenly state. Moses and Elias appeared clad in beautiful garments, shining with celestial light. The like glory is to be the portion of all who come up in the first resurrection. There is to be a time when all are to be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. They are to be transfigured, transformed into the likeness of Christ. The resurrection body is to be a spiritual body, in which there shall be no room for the aches, and ailments, disfigurements, and limitations of the earthly body. This is the promise of the apostle Paul, who declares, *"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fash-*

ioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:20, 21). And in this glorified spiritual body the redeemed shall have sweet counsel and fellowship together, and with the Savior, and then, as the apostle adds, "*So shall we be ever with the Lord.*"

THE SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

VIII.

THE SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

THE experience of the Christian convert in brief summation is simply this, an old, unspiritual life; the death of it, and a new, transformed life in Christ as Savior and Redeemer. We have an analogue to this in the awakening of Spring after the frigidity and barrenness of winter. The dull earth, lately hidden by ice and snow, sends up crocusses, daffodils, jonquils, and anemones. Wastes of meadow and lawn change color with the springing grass, and the trees, which have been unclad skeletons for weary months, are bursting forth with bud and blossom.

So with the heart of man. The old life, religiously, was the chill of winter. However fervent it might have been in the direction of the world, toward God its faculties were in suspense. Profession of the faith? None. Activity to secure the conversion of others? None. Hearty co-operation in the work of the Master? Also none.

But suddenly there comes a change. The former indifference vanishes, and the spiritual life blooms out in vernal luxuriance. Interests that once were hated, or at least ignored, are now eagerly sought. Associations that were despised are now reverenced. The heart that once was clamoring for worldly pleasures now takes delight in public worship and in holy meditation. To friends who

are still of the world all this transformation of character is a surprise. So little was such a change expected that the thoughtless attribute it to temporary excitement, or if it does not soon languish, then they ascribe it to rank fanaticism. We recall from the Book of Acts how the Jews and Gentiles, who were unsympathetic with Paul in his espousal of Jesus, set him down as a lunatic who had become crazed by overmuch learning. So the unsympathetic now, when they have their attention attracted to the joy of the convert, happy in his Savior's love, think him under the influence of a delusion, which they trust will soon subside. All remark the change, and the experienced among them realize that it closes the chapter of the past, when they can say of a friend who has been a leader in gaities, "Behold he prays."

But in this remarkable change, this death, this crucifixion of the old life and the opening of the renewed life in Christ, however those who are out in the world may misconceive and misinterpret it, Christians themselves have but the one testimony. Like the blind man, whom the hateful Jews cast out of the synagogue, they refer it all to the Savior. It is Jesus who has opened their eyes; Jesus who has wrought the radical and joyful change, and in witness of what He has accomplished for them they confess, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Mrs. Judson, wife of the famous missionary to Burmah, wrote one day in her diary, "It is a year this day since I entertained a hope in Christ. About this time in the morning, when reflecting on the words of the leper—If we enter into the city,

then the famine is in the city and we shall die there: if we sit still here, we die also—and felt that if I returned to the world I should surely perish, and I could but perish if I threw myself on the mercy of Christ. Then came light and relief and comfort such as I never knew before."

When I read the life of that great man, Dr. Norman McLeod, the Queen's Chaplain, I fell upon this passage which he wrote on his forty-fourth birthday, "Glory to God that I have been born! I praise him and bless him for the gift of an existence in a world in which his own son has been born a Savior, a brother, and in which he rules. I praise him, I bless him for such a gift, so worthy of himself. O may I realize his purpose more and more by being more and more his own child in simplicity, humility, faith, love, and undivided obedience. Intense life in Christ is intense joy." That closing sentence of the eminent divine deserves to be inscribed on every true Christian heart, "Intense life in Christ is intense joy."

Expressions such as these are general among devout Christians. It is Jesus who leads them into green pastures and beside the still waters. The living fountains of their new and happy experience are in the heart of Christ.

This change of conversion, which buries the old life, and glories in living a new life in the Son of God, is both vital and complete. With the changes in the life it alters all the prospects of the life. Imagine a man hiring for a year a splendid mansion, whose owner lets it for that time on account of taking a trip abroad. For the period of the lease, the year, the lessee has the benefit of all

the luxurious apartments, the rich furniture, the soft carpets in which the foot sinks at every step, the priceless paintings, all these are in his possession, but when the year terminates the owner comes back to enjoy his own and the tenant must depart. The arrangement after all was but a temporary makeshift.

And just that is to be said of our fairest prospects of the earth. Be they what they may, unlimited fortune, high honors, and emoluments in the service of the city or state, they are to be had only for a limited term; for when death knocks at the door, dispossess warrant in hand, the temporary tenant, unless he has laid up treasure in heaven, is poorest of the poor. Where now are all his houses and lands? Others possess them and collect their revenues. Where are the stocks and bonds and mortgages? No one deposits them in the tomb: other hands control them and enjoy their returns. A ring or a jewel may go into the casket along with the body, but even if the ring remain upon the finger, or the jewel upon the breast, they will stay there in the tomb, silent witnesses of decay and dissolution. The soul as it ascends to God takes along not a single penny of all its wealth. If it has no other credential, how lost and miserable its condition! Diogenes, stretching himself in the Athenian sunshine, had more, for he owned his earthen jar in which he could curl himself for repose at night. Lazarus begging at the rich man's gate had more, for he had a share of the crumbs that the cooks cast out to the dogs. But he who goes up to the judgment with nothing to commend him but his worldly

possessions and honors stands there with empty hands. For he cannot show a thread from all his ample wardrobe, not a splinter from all his ships and warehouses, not a farthing from all his treasure boxes.

How different the prospect for the Christian! The earth may wax old like a garment, and the elements melt with fervent heat, but his treasures which have been laid up in heaven are everlasting. No dread to him of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the wicked; nothing to him but a glad look forward to the welcome to the presence of the Lord.

That new life of the soul confers all these delightful prospects because of the change in human relations on which all the future depends. A consideration of the moral and legal aspects of adoption may aid us to a clearer understanding. A family makes arrangement to bring to the home a child from outside and adopt it for their own. Poor child! It may have been subjected to hard usage. It may often have gone hungry; it may have suffered abuse and blows and in its misery have often wished itself dead. But this family comes and takes the child. Lawyers are consulted and papers of adoption are drawn and executed. The little one is bathed, put into fresh clothing and introduced into its new habitation. To that little heart, after what it has undergone, the new place seems like paradise. There is always plenty on the table, so there are no more pangs of hunger. Besides that there is plenty of comfort and plenty of love. Does the little heart ever tremble lest all this happiness may vanish. No need of that! For

back of all is the changed relationship. This child does not belong to the street any more, it is a child of the home. The law settles that. There is no question of birthright about it. The seal of adoption binds the home to the child and the child to the home.

Similarly whenever the Christian suffers from low spirits and begins to ask himself if it is possible that he can be worthy of the abounding grace of God, he can fall back upon his adoption into the heavenly family, which fact binds him to God and God to him.

But how has this been brought about? The case is simple enough. He has surrendered the world in his open profession of faith, and in the act he has struck a definite alliance with heaven. He has put away all his former enmity to God whom he now loves. He has rejoiced in the grace of the gospel and accepted its terms of mercy through the gift of the Savior. He has come into the house of God, not as a stranger, not as a visitor, not as an alien, but as a fellow citizen with the saints, and as an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. Because of this new relation, Peter promises him an *"inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."* (1 Pet. 1:4). Paul explains it also when he wrote to the Romans, *"The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."* (Rom. 8:16). There is great fulness of promise in that phrase of Paul's, *"joint heirs with Christ."* That means nothing short of this, if Christ has rights in the kingdom of glory because He is the Son of God, that the Christian

by the same token shares in those same rights with Him. The relation of being a Christian gives the hope; first, in God's amazing grace; and second, in God's amazing promises; and third, in God's amazing obligation. The Christian is the child of God: wherefore God must sustain, and maintain, and save His child.

But the change from the old life to the new life in Christ reaches beyond this field of prospects and relationships and takes up the question of character. What is character? The word itself signifies a mark, a stamp, a figure, a symbol, traced or cut or hewn; but always, be it what it may, something that is fixed and settled. So under Christ's instruction the soul acquires a stamp, a character. It is outlined by the influences it has experienced, hewn by its adversities, graven by its conscious acceptance of Christian responsibilities. There can be a worldly character. It has a fixedness in pursuits and pleasures that begin in the earth and that rise no higher. And there is Christian character; character stamped with the ineffaceable escutcheon of the cross. How is the worldly character changed into the other? It is by the grace of God. God's spirit melts the stony heart in the furnace of His redeeming love, and while it is still tender He stamps it with the seal of heaven. In this divine operation one may grant all that may be asked respecting the effective working of man in the effort to deepen the work of grace, to engrave the heavenly markings in deeper lines; but conversion itself is the work of God; God drawing man to Himself, and God bestowing the new heart and the new life.

We meet this radical change of character in that dissolute and profane tinker of Bedford, John Bunyan. All his pursuits were low, his companions vulgar and dissipated, and all his thought was on the worldly plane. He was alive with the joy of living, but religion with him was a thing to be hated and despised. But to this man of gross pursuits and pleasures came a vital experience. While crossing the fields one day he seemed to hear a voice in his soul, saying, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" Right there came the decisive struggle, sin trying to hold its dominion over him, grace striving for his salvation. At length he cast himself upon the divine mercy and was at once a different man. Profanity was put out of his mouth and he was singing the songs of Jesus. His ribaldry was turned to praying, and his delight in the rude sports of the field of his day was transformed into the peace and comfort of Christian worship. His mind turned to heavenly themes. No man of that age was able to write so winsomely of the wicked gate, of the Interpreter's house, and of the Delectable Mountains; and this was possible because his whole heart was devoted to the concerns of his Savior. What a change from the ribald songs of the tavern to composing that noble book, "The Pilgrim's Progress."

This God-given Christian character imposes responsibilities and obligations. The Christian along with his other desirable traits acquires a keen sense of honor. Duties which in the former time were calmly ignored now have become imperative. These include all religious duties; a holy

conversation, and influence, faithful attendance upon divine worship, the moral and material support of the Gospel, and the reading and study of Holy Scripture, so that he may continue in touch with the mind of God. But the awakened sense of Christian obligation goes further still. The Christian feels that in every emergency he must act worthy of the Master. This will account for the surprising record of Christian beneficence. Full ninety per cent. of the vast sums contributed for benevolent purposes, for the founding of hospitals and colleges and other benevolent institutions has come from the hearts and purses of Christians. This is to be explained in two ways. It may be said that the most of the wealth of the world is in Christian hands. That is doubtless true, for God blesses righteousness. But the men who hold what wealth they possess with the tightest grip are the non-Christians.

Christianity imposes obligation. An instance in point comes to us from the siege of Acre in 1799, where the French were attacking the Turks by land, and the English were co-operating with their shipping from the sea. A storming party of the French assaulted the wall, but was driven back and their general was slain. The Turks struck off his head and then flung the body over the wall, to be devoured by the dogs that swarm about every Turkish settlement. An English sailor on the admiral's ship heard of the indignity to the French general, and remembering the kindness shown himself when some years before he was in a French prison, decided to rescue the body and give it Christian burial. For this purpose he

obtained leave to go ashore, and equipped with pick and shovel he dug the grave, being all the while exposed to the fire of the enemy. When he returned from his self-imposed task, Sir Sidney, the admiral, summoned him to his cabin, and said, "I hear you have buried the French general."

"Yes, your Honor."

"Had you any assistance?"

"Yes, your Honor."

"I understood you had nobody with you."

"But I had, your Honor."

"Ah, who had you?"

"God Almighty, sir."

It is no wonder that a man, common sailor though he was, who realized himself in the Divine presence like that, was impelled to a mission, from which others who think little about God would not have dreamed of undertaking. Such changes, changes in relationships and changes in character, are part of the Christian life, and flow directly from the great change which we call conversion.

This change grows out of a radical change in the human heart. The idea that a man can change himself by adopting a new philosophy, or by making a fresh set of moral resolutions, is erroneous. No such explanation will account for the power of the Christian faith in these twenty centuries. Theories and philosophies may restrain, and may even cause some degree of amandment, but they do not convert. When you read Sallust's introductions to his histories you might regard him a saint until you check his words up with other histories which display him as utterly dissolute and immoral. Byron was a master poet, but his life

was corrupt. Yet how pure and tender and worshipful are his Hebrew melodies. If the mere patching together of virtuous phrases, and the utterance of pious sentiments could make Christians, we might find budding apostles in every county jail.

The Bible is the best authority on conversion, and it tells us that religion mends life by cleansing the heart. The Spirit of God cleanses the fountain, and when that has been done pure waters flow. Hear the word of Paul on this, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."* (Gal. 2:20). Analyze that thought, "crucified with Christ." On the cross of Calvary was death; death of the Son of God, but also death of the curse of the law, death of the power of the law, and death of sin and of the power of sin. Paul, who through faith was partaker of Christ's crucifixion, became dead to sin and all sinful associations. Scattered all through his epistles we find allusions to this idea, which was a favorite with him. It appears in this phrase in Romans, *"Knowing that our old man is crucified with him."* (Rom. 6:6). The same thought is found again in Galatians, where he speaks of the Lord Jesus, *"By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Gal. 6:14). And so we have it in the familiar hymn,

> "Free from the law, O happy condition,
> Jesus hath bled and there is remission;
> Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
> Grace hath redeemed me once for all."

But there is more than this for the Christian. After death then life. As there was death on the

cross, so there was life when the Savior on the resurrection morn burst the bars of death and triumphed over the grave. The convert who dies to the world is ready to be raised with Christ in glory, ready to have Christ in him the hope of glory. Christ comes to him. He enters the soul. He rules the life. He becomes an abiding spiritual presence. From that moment sin hath no more dominion over the trusting disciple. How beautifully the Scripture teaches of the indwelling Christ. *"I am the vine,"* so says Jesus, *"ye are the branches."* What is the interpretation? The branch lives and grows and blossoms and bears fruit so long as it draws its life from the vine. So Jesus continues, *"As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me."* (John 15:4). How like that is the apostle's word, *"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."* (Gal. 2:20). John in the Revelation teaches to the same effect, speaking the word of the Master, *"Behold I stand at the door and knock."* (Rev. 3:20). It is the King coming to His kingdom. Heart, fling wide that door! All joy when the Lord Christ enters and enthrones Himself in the Christian's soul. So in another familiar passage Paul speaks of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual presence. Thus he asks, *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* (1 Cor. 3:16). And he emphasizes his admonition in the verse which follows, *"For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* (1. 17). The thought here is that after the glory had departed from Zion,

and the Shekinah ceased to flood the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies with its splendid radiance the Spirit now will come to the believer, a refreshing guest to take up its abode in his worshipful soul. Where that spiritual presence is found we may expect a brighter hope, a loftier ideal, and the purer life.

But there is another thought, one which should be sufficient of itself for a Sabbath Day's reflection: namely, that if Christ in spiritual presence is dwelling in the Christian's soul he is under the influence of the direct personality of the Savior. As yet we know little of the human mind and its strange reactions. A weaker mind often submits to the leadership of some stronger mind. Nothing is more common than the overriding of personality. If the history of crime is carefully traced it will appear that the most of the wicked—the robbers, the burglars, the murderers—have been tools in the hand of a stronger intelligence. Shakespeare shows this in his Macbeth, where the woman dominates. She stirs her mate's ambition, she pushes him on to regicide, she sustains him against the stings of memory and conscience. Such analogies assist in understanding the domination of a better personality. Where Christ dwells within His disciple, the disciple yields to the master power of Christ. The nearer he lives to his Savior, the more will the Savior's glorious character be reflected in his mind and in his conduct. Such a Christian will work the works of

Christ, think with the thought of Christ, and reach out the helping hand with the gentleness of Christ. It is glory for any soul who can honestly say with the apostle, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"

THE SUPREME TRAGEDY

IX.

THE SUPREME TRAGEDY

CHRIST is the central personage of the Scripture revelation. The Bible presents Him as the Savior of sinners and represents His death for sinners as the central point in His plan of salvation. The destiny of the human race balances on Calvary and the cross of the suffering Savior.

Some who fail to see these truths clearly minimize the importance of the cross while they lay greater stress upon the Master's life and teaching. To them the death of Jesus was a comparatively obscure event. But it is well to remember that the natural estimate of events and circumstances is not the fit measure of the historical perspective. Athens was a famous name in history. She was the capital of classical culture, and she still reigns as queen of literature and art. And yet in actual extent of territory she was insignificant enough. All her lands which she governed in the days of her power could be set down in one of our western counties, which would still own a broad belt all about her. The Rubicon, which counts for so much in the annals of Rome, the memorable river into which great Caesar plunged, and Rome was free no more, is in fact merely an insignificant stream which a boy can wade. No, our historical values cannot be estimated with regard to magnitudes

and scenic grandeur. When it came to the giving forth of the Ten Commandments, words of inestimable worth, they were delivered, not in some magnificent temple of Memphis or Heliopolis, but in the desolation and solitude of the Sinaitic wilderness. Christ the promised Messiah descends to the earth. He borrows no honors from the palaces of luxury, no approbation from proud priests and haughty princes. He is the child of poverty, not of riches. He is born, not in Jerusalem the great and holy, but in little Bethlehem. He is cradled in no splendid heirloom of royal magnificence, but in the feeding trough of the stable. And yet His presence could shed honor upon that. Were that stone feeding trough now to be discovered and identified it would have a price in the market better than if it were of solid gold, and set with the blaze of rubies and diamonds. And so with Calvary. It was but a little hill, a mere knob of the earth, and not to be compared with the dignity of Moriah or of Zion. Its true position is still so doubtful that the matter is a subject of controversy to this hour, and yet historically considered it towers above the highest ranges of the Andes or the Himalayas.

Speak of power, then Calvary shall be its token. He who said, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;"* (John 12: 32), from that cross has been summoning the nations. What dry eyes have filled with tears, what stony hearts have melted with love, from contemplation of the suffering Christ. Unwelcome duty never twined the cable for lifting man upward like the silken cord of that tender recollection. Or one

may recite instances of remarkable affection. He might tell of that eastern princess, who nursed the English knight from his wounds and fever in her Syrian tent in the time of the Crusades, and who when he had bidden her farewell and rode away followed him all the journey to his western home. She knew but two words of his language: London, his city; and Gilbert, his name. But love led, she made her way to the west, through Italy and France and across the Channel with her word, London; and when she had reached the town, she went through the streets calling, Gilbert, Gilbert, till she found her knight and a welcome to his home and life. Or, one might speak of the mother, perishing in the wintry snow, who to save her babe stripped off her own garments and wrapped them about the child, and was later found cold and frozen but with a living babe in her arms. But the love of Christ was richer by far than these. Paul gives some estimate of it when he says that *"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom. 5:8).

Or, there may be thought of mercy. The world delights to think of that great man, Abraham Lincoln, who made it his rule to listen every day to some petition which involved the saving of life. Senators and foreign ambassadors might cool their heels in the anteroom while waiting to see the President, when he was hearing the plea of some wife or mother for husband or son. And yet of all the mercy known to man it is the mercy of the cross which supplies the supreme example. There on the cross was the Christ, tortured with thirst and agony, but while persecutors were rag-

ing His heart was overflowing with divine compassion. They mock at His suffering, but listen! He is praying for them. The one malefactor repents and pleads for remembrance when Christ comes to His kingdom, and Jesus from the cross gives him the pledge of paradise. O blessed cross of adorable compassion!

> "Here I'll sit forever viewing
> Mercy's streams in streams of blood:
> Precious drops, my soul bedewing,
> Plead and claim my peace with God."

Not only should the Christian feel his obligation to Calvary: he should know its true relation to the world of life and thought. Often those of us who are familiar with the ground of some region find the mapmakers very exasperating, when on consulting the chart we see that the draftsman has given a highway a sharp curve to the right, when we know that at that point the road turns to the left; or when he has set some town that we are interested in three or four miles out of the way. But how replete with such blunders is the map of religious thought! How frequently does some religious teacher, who has been plotting his religious chart more from his imagination than from the sure measurements of the Bible, get Calvary too close to the Mount of Retributive Justice, and too remote from the fountain of grace. And how frequently again is it removed from the vicinage of Jerusalem, a city of habitation, where its blessings may flow forth to the multitude, and is marked for some barren wilderness far away, as if it had been ordained for none but monks and hermits of the desert.

Here it is of all places that we desire correct interpretation and the clear outlook. We should survey Christ's atoning work as God has revealed it in the Scripture. We want no false bounds to its scope or its efficacy. We would see Calvary itself, and its significance as set forth in the Gospel. We would know, if possible, not only that Christ died for sinners, but also the underlying reason. For such an investigation we may set three principal postulates to guide the pathway of thought: that Christ died for sinners, that He went the way of death willingly, and that He went willingly in the voluntary laying down of His life.

Respecting this matter Christ in one of His addresses to the disciples told them plainly, *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."* (John 10:18). Here was a forward look by the Savior to the approaching death of the cross. It is the solid truth of the Word that Christ died for sinners. When we contemplate this great truth which gleams out through all the Gospel, we are humiliated to the dust, and then exalted to the heavens. We are humiliated at the waywardness of the race, shamed that man has wandered so far from the favor of God, shamed at the enormity of other men's sin, and at the enormity of our own, which rendered it necessary for the Son of God to bare His back to the smiters for us, and be sent to the cross for us, He dying that we might live. But again, when we glance at the other side and realize how Christ has rescued us out of the pit of iniquity, how He has borne our sins and healed our sicknesses; how he has taken poor, struggling humanity by the hand

of love, and clothed us all anew and led us to the bosom of the Father, and made possible and actual our dreams of eternal life, then we rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

But what is the basis of this glorious hope? It is truly and simply the actual suffering and death of the Son of God. The Scripture presents the several steps of this humiliation of the Savior, through which we receive the consummation of eternal life.

First there is the incarnation. Respecting this John declares that the Word was made flesh, or in the better rendering, the Word became flesh. The Son of God was born as the son of Mary. How surprising this descent! The apostle Paul says of it, *"He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."* (Phil. 2:7). There in Bethlehem Mary folds to her heart the babe, whom kings from the east adore. Well may they offer princely gifts of gold and myrrh and frankincense, for this is the King of kings and Lord of lords. In this child is seen the remarkable union of the human and the divine. The Pharisees could not grasp that great thought, but their incompetence is no argument against the truth. One day Jesus staggered His opponents, who had come to Him in a conspiracy to put Him to shame in His teaching, but putting to them the question, *"What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?"* They replied as they had read in their Scriptures, *"The son of David."* And then He continued, *"How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"*

And that word He followed by the still more confusing question, *"If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"* (Matt. 22:42-44). There were complications in the mission of the Messiah, as shown in their own Bible which they had never taken into account. So they were unable to answer, and they were the ones who were shamed, and not He. But we through the help of the Gospels can catch the meaning and resolve the intricacy of the mystery. For as Christ was born of Mary, a daughter of the line of David, He was in the direct line of descent from David the king. But on the other side, since He was the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, He was David's Lord, according to the Scripture.

The humanity of Jesus is to be understood rightly when we consider it as a real humanity. The Scripture names Him our brother, our elder brother, and these terms make this human relationship evident. It was because He was human like ourselves that we realize that He could be tempted. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews explains Jesus' competency as our great High Priest on this basis, saying, *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb. 4:15).

Then also this real humanity of Jesus was tabernacled in an actual human body. One of the early heresies was a denial of this truth. Right in the time of the apostles there were some who went about denying that Christ had come in the flesh; some of them denying that He had come at all,

and some denying that He had come in the body. They argued that the Lord could not have stooped so low as to live in a body composed of flesh and blood, so that if He came at all, it must have been in the appearance of a body and not a real body at all. But where would a view like that take us? Before we start off on a journey it is of interest to make sure that we shall not fetch up in some boghole, but shall reach some pleasant and acceptable destination. But this notion of Christ's body being an appearance of a body would take Jesus out of the range of humanity. Were it true it would be idle to claim Him as the Second Adam, connected by blood relationship to the first Adam, and to all the human race to its ultimate generation. Let such a notion as that be established, and there would be no ground for the outworking of a real atonement.

But there is another objection to the opinion that the body of Christ was not a really human body, since such a conclusion would involve His whole life on the earth into a series of deceits and false pretences. This age of ours is a hater of shams and it could never bring itself into sympathy with a sham so elaborate as that, the presentation of a life to parallel ours, to pretend to be like ours, and yet to be in all respects a life of pretention. This age could not approve of a simulation of hunger and thirst and pain that were not real, but merely assumed in order to produce an effect. None of us could be lifted to a higher and more spiritual life by a career that was in fact deception from beginning to end. But John disposes of all that in summary fashion. His Christ is a

Christ of realities. All His hungerings, all His wearinesses and faintings, all His discouragements and griefs were actual and real. And He branded as an enemy any man who sought to deny the reality of all these experiences. He is emphatic in His speech when He says, *"Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ."* (2 John 7).

Another step in the investigation brings us to the thought that since Christ's body was a real body it was possible for Him to die. Consequently we are to understand that His dying was also a reality. Here again we are approaching dark and inscrutable questions. Who can comprehend what it is to pass through the hour and article of death? To do so would require a complete understanding of life in all its relations and as yet we are only on the threshold of that. But we can comprehend that as life is the manifestation of an invisible spirit linked into practical union with a visible body, so death is the rending asunder of those ties so that the spirit departs and leaves the body behind. While the spirit rules in the mortal frame it bids the heart continue to throb, it sends the blood coursing through the arterial system and draws it back to the life centers through the veins, it casts out worn out tissues and assimilates new tissues, it strengthens and recuperates and energizes these fleeting particles of perishing dust in such control that they seem endowed with strength and life. But when the spirit fails then life fails, and when the spirit takes its departure the body returns to dissolution and falls back to its parental

dust. And something of that change came to the Savior. One moment He was living. He was enduring the rage of His persecutors. He suffered the jibes of careless by-standers. He experienced all the pain of humiliation and the dagger thrusts of bodily agony. And when He had borne it all to the end He exclaimed, *"It is finished,"* and yielded up the spirit. When the spirit departed the change was death. The soldiers who came expecting to deal the death stroke found Him dead. They reported Him as dead to Pilate, who was surprised that the end had come so soon. So the death of Christ was a real death. And it was just so much more death than the like event which is our common lot, as the Savior's perfect body was more sound and healthful than these bodies of ours. Disease enfeebles the body. The aged, whose natural powers have yielded under the strife of years, sometimes drop away with not so much as a struggle or a moan. But it is difficult for the strong to die. The more active all the vital forces, so much the more the tenacious the grip of the spirit to the body and of body to spirit. And we may well believe that the body of Jesus was strong. The record does not anywhere mention Him as suffering a moment from illness. The Paschal lamb was without spot or blemish, and this was the physical type of the Savior, a type pre-figuring His immaculate morality, and we may also believe His wholesome health of the physical nature. He had power to lay down that life, that life so full, so vigorous; but it involved a struggle. And that struggle He faced with resolution. They would have reached to His lips the stupefying

draught which would have lessened the trial, but would have none of it. He proposed to tread the wine press of suffering alone. And He died alone, in a passion of forsakenness and loneliness. Can we realize the depth of that suffering in our behalf?

> "His name is Jesus, and He died
> For guilty sinners, crucified:
> Content to die that He might win
> Their ransom from the death of sin.
> No sinner worse than I can be,
> Therefore I know He died for me."

Christ died willingly. This proposition combats two errors: the first, that Christ died by compulsion from man; the second, that He died by compulsion from God. In these days we are frequently hearing Jesus extolled as dying the martyr death; the true man, battling against a world of lies and overborne by their momentum. He is sometimes represented as weak and helpless; as a noble reformer, who lifted up His voice in an evil day, with a speech that was too bold for His hearers; that He provoked enmities which He was powerless to allay, and that His untimely challenge of prevalent iniquities roused a storm of indignation which swept Him to death. Those who picture Him thus would have us view Him as submissive when hope was dead, and silent because His projects had been crushed beyond remedy. But this cannot be the representation of the Gospels. In the Gospel story one may see hatreds deep and bitter, and the encompassing nets of treachery, and the mounting wrath of the priestly class, and the plots of crafty officialdom to entrap

and destroy Him. All that part of it is true enough and no one desires to disclaim its faithfulness to the facts. But Jesus crushed! Christ overwhelmed! The Savior forced to His death! That would be misrepresentation. There was not power enough lodged in the whole body of the Jews who were crowded into Jerusalem for the Passover feast, and there was more than a million of them —not power enough in them all to have harmed a hair of the Savior's head save by His full and free consent. When men sought to destroy Him before His time was come they found all their subtle plans vain and fruitless. They picked up stones to kill Him as He was teaching in the temple. One moment He was there before them, but the next He was not seen, and they hunted Him all about the usual places, but He was not to be found. At Nazareth they seized Him in the synagogue, and rushed Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, with intent to cast Him over, but suddenly He was gone, and they knew not where. Even when they were nailing him to the cross, had He been so minded He could have summoned twelve legions of angels to the rescue, and have come down from the cross with not so much as a wound to deface His sacred person. That is the meaning of His word when He said of His life, *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."* Only when He delivered Himself freely to their rage and malice was it possible for men to bind Him, to scourge Him, and to crucify Him.

But if men did not compel Jesus to His death, no more was He compelled to it on the part of God. That expression, *"No man taketh it from*

me," is more forcible than it seems. The revision presents it better in the rendering, *"No one taketh it from me."* This signifies that men did not force Christ to the cross, and that no other power forced Him there. It would be well if the modern church would rid itself of the notion which too much vogue in past days that there was ever any difference or disagreement in the divine counsels over the great work of human redemption. We are getting away from the thought of God being wrathful against His children. God is not a God of wrath, but of infinite love; and it was the yearning of infinite love, and with adulteration of wrathfulness that prompted the sending of the Savior with the message of peace and salvation. And while God was planning in infinite love for the Son to descend on the mission of grace, the Son was willing to live and to suffer, if by such means man could be brought to his senses and accept the Gospel. The whole ministry of Jesus is witness of His willingness to suffer. Time and again He declares that He is to suffer many things of the chief priests and the elders, that He is to be crucified and that He is to rise again on the third day. As the shadow of the cross was lengthening over His pathway He did not attempt to escape it, but went up to Jerusalem, where His foes were the most numerous and the most hateful. In the rush of the impending crisis, when His spirit was passing through the cloud of trouble, though He saw the cross looming up before Him He went firmly forward, saying to Pilate, *"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the*

world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John 18:37).

At the Last Supper, when He knew the heart of Judas, and that He had been trafficing with the chief priests to betray Him, He made no effort to dissuade him, but to the contrary dismissed him to the despicable errand with the word, "*That thou doest, do quickly.*" (John 13:27). The band of the High Priest came to the garden at midnight. They were conspicuous with their staves and flaming torches. Nothing could have been easier than for Jesus, if He willed it, to elude them in the darkness and escape. But there was no attempt to escape. He went forward to meet them and placed Himself in their hands. And in all that followed there was not an act, not a breath to suggest Him as being crushed or overwhelmed. All the way He was calm, the one calm soul, though the victim of a whirlwind of tempestuous passion. He was calm before the Sanhedrin, He was calm before Herod, calm before Pilate, and calm on the cross. True, He fainted on the way to Calvary, but that was the exhaustion of nature, not the failure of loving purpose. No. From first to last Christ's face was set willingly toward the cross. No man took His life; He laid it down of Himself. When we think of Him thus as uncomplaining, of His permitting His foes to mistreat Him as they would; silent, pitiful, forgiving; and then remember the purpose of it all, His life for our life, we may well exclaim with Rousseau in that word which is all the more impressive because extorted by admiration from the lips of unbelief, "Socrates

died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God."

But there are some declarations of the Scripture which bear directly on Christ's dying willingly in the voluntary surrender of His life. When the evangelists came to the culmination of the supreme tragedy they were very choice in their terms of expression. No one of the four contents himself with merely saying that Jesus died, and in place of that simple statement they all make use of terms which imply death, but which also make clear that the death was voluntary in the final act. Mark and Luke agree in saying that He "breathed out," or as we have it translated, that He "gave up the ghost." Matthew puts it with still greater force when he says, "he sent away the spirit." But John, as might be expected, makes the still clearer statement that He "delivered over the spirit." Augustine, the great leader of the African church, commenting on these suggestive expressions, declares of Christ that He gave up His life, *Quia voluit,* because He pleased; *quando voluit,* when He pleased, and *quomodo voluit,* in what manner He pleased.

The events of that day of the Supreme Tragedy sustain the suggestions of the evangelists as to our Lord's voluntary surrender of His life.

The cross, as we know, was not merely the instrument of death but also of unspeakable torture. The orient has been lavish in its devices by which death could be produced in inches, dragging outraged nature to the verge of the precipice of death, and then retarding the moment when death gives relief from unspeakable agony. Of these

devices the cross was the most terrible. With the ingenuity of the bottomless pit its inventor arranged that no wound inflicted upon the victim should touch any vital part. A support was provided for the body, so that its weight should not drag upon the quivering hands and feet. The spikes that were driven through these members prevented loss of blood, though every nerve was thrilling with agony. The sufferer was exposed for hours to the blaze of a semi-tropical sun, beating upon his defenceless head, and his whole frame was tortured with pain and shock, with congestions and fiery inflamations and burning thirst. But death tarried long. Cases on record show that frequently the crucified lingered for days before dying. Josephus tells of some who were on the cross even longer than the Savior, and who nevertheless were taken down and recovered. But in Judea, because of the scruples of the people it was necessary that death should occur before nightfall. And so when the Romans practiced this form of judicial punishment in Judea, they adopted the expedient of breaking the legs of the crucified in the afternoon with heavy hammers, and so by added shock hastening the end.

We also recall that Jesus died at the ninth hour; that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon. His early death was a surprise. It was a surprise to the soldiers, for when they came to break the legs of the sufferers, though both the malefactors were living, Jesus was dead. It was a surprise to Pilate, for when Joseph of Arimathea went to the governor to beg the body of Jesus Pilate marveled that he was dead already. In fact, so great was

his surprise that he would not accept the word of Joseph, but sent for the centurion who was in charge of the execution, and only when the centurion confirmed the fact, did he make out the order for the delivery of the body.

But while the early death of Jesus was a surprise, so also was the manner of the death. From what has been stated, in the case of death by the cross the end followed extreme exhaustion. The vital forces gave way after prolonged suffering. The close therefore in the nature of things would come with weakness, faintness, and torpor, the life finally going out as the candle flame flickers and expires when the light has burned down to the socket. But that was not the case in the death of Jesus. All His energies were alert to the very last. He exhibited no lack of strength, no wandering of the mental faculties. When the supreme moment came He spoke. The tone was not the feeble breath of exhaustion: it was an outcry. Three of the evangelists describe it as a loud outcry. And the language of that outcry was significant and in full conformity with our conclusion as to His willing death. Hear Him say, *"It is finished. Father into thy hands I commend my spirit."* How else shall these words be interpreted than to mean that at that supreme moment He willed to die, to lay down His life, to deliver over the spirit to the Father?

Other circumstances combine to support this view. When the soldiers came and found Him dead, one of them lifted his broad lance and thrust it into the Savior's side, and at that, so says the record, *"forthwith came there out blood and*

water." What has physiological science to offer as to this phenomenon? Science recognizes that there can be actual breaking of the heart, a rupture of the organ, which brings speedy death. Among those who are known to have died of a heart that had burst open were a Duchess of Brunswick, Dr. Abercrombie of Edinburgh, and King George II of England. When death comes under this form it is commonly under the shock of some sudden and overwhelming joy or sorrow; the death is sudden; it is attended with loud outcry, and the blood which pours out into the pericardium, the sack that encloses the heart, forms in heavy clots that float in a watery serum. And so the incidents of the cross seem to point to the Savior's having died from a broken heart. O the burden and the grief of it! What weight of agony and scorn He suffered! What humiliation to have come with the offer of divine salvation, and to be received with hatred and persecution! What grief to know that with so many of them all that He was offering would not touch their hardened consciences! All this Jesus was bearing together with sorrow for the sins of the sinful world. He was bearing the weight of all human sin in the past, the weight of the sins of those that were then on the earth, the sin of the Roman soldiers, the sin of Pilate, the sin of the High Priest, the sins of the whole nation, and the sins of all men in all the ages that were still to come. All this burden lay heavily upon Him. Hence the darkness. Hence the feeling of forsakenness. All this He bore for us till the fulness of time was come, until every requirement of law, and of prophecy, and of grace

was complete; until all was done that omnipotent mercy could accomplish for the redemption of humanity without coercing its freedom, and then He surrendered the burden and relaxed the earthly life.

> " 'Tis finished, so the Savior cried,
> And meekly bowed His head and died.
> 'Tis finished, Yes, the race is run,
> The battle fought, the victory won."

Jesus died. What should that teach us respecting man's imperative need? God fits His means to the ends required. There are no wastes in the divine administration. But if, as the Scriptures teach, "It must needs be that Christ should suffer," how shall it be with those who reject the offered mercy? If this Jesus be God's remedy for the sins of men, where else shall they look for helping?

Jesus died. How great the gift of God, for He did not die in vain. The remedy which God offers is ample. Whoever comes to Him in penitence will be received. He will smite the chains of our captivity and restore our spiritual freedom. And how shall we use our freedom but in living for Him, following in His footsteps, and doing the works He bids us in willing and uttermost devotion!

HEADSHIP IN THE CHURCH

X.

HEADSHIP IN THE CHURCH

WHEN Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was carrying the Gospel to the Jews in their synagogues in the principal cities of Asia Minor, he made his proclamation of the new church which was to supplant and replace every other form of religion, that of the Jews no less than of the others. This new company of believers composed an absolutely new institution in the earth; new in its relation to the civil government, from which unlike all the rest it was free and independent. All other religions were national, and were controlled more or less from the throne. The Judaism of Moses was a state religion, and in the time of our Lord the Roman authorities, who were ruling in Palestine, dictated who should be the High Priest, and they kept a detachment of Roman soldiers in the tower at the corner of the temple inclosure, so that in case of any disturbance rising within the temple these soldiers could rush down and restore the peace. But the new faith of Jesus had no such entangling alliances and wished for none.

The faith was new again in that it contemplated universal extension. It has been said of Judaism that it was a tribal faith, and that the Jehovah of the Jews was a tribal God. There is truth in the first part of the statement, but the second is to

be characterized as one of the fantastic aberrations of Teutonic scholarship. Judaism was tribal insofar as it was professed mainly by Jews, although from the time of Ezekiel forward many Gentiles became proselytes to Judaism and were received into the Jewish fold. But Jehovah was no tribal God in the sense intended by those who apply that term. He was the One God, the Living God, the God of all the earth, and all men were His children. That sweet Bible story of Ruth, one of the charming idyls of literature, has for its central teaching the truth that God is the God of all nations. For Ruth was married to Boaz, and was incorporated into that sacred line from which Christ was to be born. There was nothing to shut her out from the love of God, even though she was a daughter of Moab. And Paul gives no doubt as to the universality of the new teaching. For as he declared in the Colossian letter, in this new faith, *"There is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."* (Col. 5:11).

And the new faith was new furthermore in that its leaders were assured of world conquest. No such claim had ever been made before. As the haughty Romans advanced in the course of their victories over the nations they carried their own worship with them, but they made no effort to force it upon the conquered. They did not expect other nations to set up Roman altars. When Alexander was marching across Asia to the bank of the Indus he did not impose his worship upon the Brahmins, nor did he care how his subject

races conducted their devotions. But the missionaries of the cross had the world-wide ambition. They were not to rest till all the continents, and even the isles of the sea, had heard and accepted the Gospel. Before their eyes was the vision of the Savior, not now the Sufferer, but the universal Governor, the Conqueror, to whom every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It was such a Christ whom Paul announced to the church at Colosse as the Head over the body, the church. He spoke in the same strain to the Ephesians at the culmination of a fervid passage in praise of Jesus, whom he names the *"Head over the church in all things."* (Eph. 1:23). The glorified Redeemer has many titles of high honor in the New Testament. In the first letter to Timothy Jesus is called the *"One Mediator between God and man."* (1 Tim. 2:5). John in his first epistle styles Him our "Advocate with the Father." (1 John 2:1). And the same apostle, in the Revelation, pictures Him in His majesty, and as having *"on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."* (Rev. 19:16). But while all these titles are tributes to the Savior's power and authority, the believer has special interest in Christ's being Head of the body, the church. For he considers the relation of the head to the human body. In the headship of Christ over the church he reads the several implications of the Lord as Founder of His church, as the Supreme Governor of the church, as the Particular Friend of the church, and as the capable Protector of the church.

We may consider for a moment the Head of the church in the attitude of being its Founder. It is right to speak of the church as Christ's church, because He planned the church, because He laid its foundations, and because He called and instructed and ordained the disciples, whom He commissioned as missionaries to scatter the Gospel message to the ends of the earth. When we reflect upon the work of our Lord in the brief period of His earthly ministry, three and a half years, in which time He prepared the way for the church and gave it the vitality which made it a success, our minds leap to the inevitable conclusion that Christ Himself and no other was the Founder of the church. It is not to be forgotten that He spoke definitely of the church as "My church," (Matt. 16:18) and the plain teaching of that phrase Paul confirms in his address to the brethren at Miletus, when he alluded to the church, which, as he says, *"Christ hath purchased with his own precious blood."* (Acts 20:28). And Jesus spoke to the same effect in Luke, where He says of His kingdom, *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it.* (Luke 16:16). In this passage the term "kingdom" is the equivalent of "church," and it seems to have been already established and under way, since men were already pressing into its fellowship. So natural is the thought of Christ as having founded His own church, that we experience the shock of surprise when we hear the claim that some one else established the kingdom.

And yet there are many who put forth that strange and unnatural contention. A certain great church has predicated its claim for the primacy of Peter among the apostles on the assumption that Peter, and not the Lord, was the founder. They argue that Christ was crucified and buried, and that He ascended to glory before there was ever any Christian church, and that the actual Christian church was brought into being on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached that courageous sermon, and when three thousand were added to the church. That being so those subtle theologians who press the lordly claims of the Roman bishop say that that was the genesis of the Christian church, and that Peter is to have the honor of giving it its form and being. When this argument for the exaltation of the Roman bishop is examined it will be found to have several flaws, as is always the case with any contention that is at variance with the truth. Suppose for the argument's sake that Peter did preach so persuasively that three thousand were added to the church. Of course that was a fact, for the historian of the Acts so declares. But if three thousand were "added to the church," then the church must have been in existence already. For it is impossible to add something to nothing. For Peter to have added ten to the church there must have been a church before he preached the sermon, and so it may be concluded that Peter did not found the church on the day of Pentecost, or on any other day. Christ Himself was the Founder of His church, and not Peter at all. But permit this thought of Peter founding the church to be carried still further.

The sole ground for the claim that Peter founded the church on the day of Pentecost lies in the fact that the ingathering of three thousand was an event of surpassing importance, an event that marked a great change in church history. But there were other occasions that were just as important as that. One was the occasion when in order to silence the complaints about the daily dole it was deemed necessary to reorganize the church by the appointment of seven new officials, Stephen at their head, who were named deacons. Another such occasion was when Peter went from Joppa to Caesarea, where he inaugurated a revolution in church management by baptizing the centurion Cornelius. Up to that moment none had been baptized into the church but Jews, and Peter was admitting to fellowship a Gentile, known to be such by his Roman name, and by his position as a centurion in the Roman army. And still later there was a great council held in Jerusalem, the first real council of the church, which introduces a novelty of church administration, and an innovation on observances, for it practically set aside the requirements respecting meats and the rite of circumcision. Every one of these occasions, the appointment of the deacons, the baptism of a Roman, and the holding of a council to settle moot questions of doctrine and order, was in every whit as notable as what Peter did on the day of Pentecost. If what Peter did on the day of Pentecost is to be esteemed as founding the church, then each of the other three incidents was a founding of the church, which would give us four separate and several foundings of the church, a setting up of

four separate and several kingdoms in the church in the short space of twenty-two years, a supposition which is manifestly absurd on its face. But if the three suppositions are absurd, the first is no less so, the supposition that Peter founded the church; and indeed it is the crowning absurdity of them all.

But it is to be remembered further that there are others beside Rome who are putting forth the claim that Peter, and not Christ, founded the church, for there are Protestant Christians, and not a few of them, either, who are saying the very same thing. We may not believe that such Protestant Christians are making this claim for Peter in order to support the presumptions of the Roman bishop. For while they are setting up Peter as head of the church they do not consider the Roman bishop at all. Their reason for their claim lies in some theological fancy of their own, which they are zealous in foisting upon the church. If they realized where their logic was carrying them it is doubtful if they would remain harnessed up with that company. Let that be as it may, we may conclude respecting the advocates of the Primacy of Peter, and of any others who for reasons of their own are axalting Peter to the point of making him the Founder of the church, that Christ, and not Peter, established the Christian church.

But if Peter did not found the church on the day of Pentecost, what did he accomplish on that memorable day? He did precisely what the Scripture reports him as doing. He preached the Gospel effectively. He interpreted the leadings of God

with His ancient people with fidelity. He exhorted the contrite Jews with such persuasive power that three thousand of them united with the church. That of itself was glory enough for Peter, and is all the glory which he would claim in the matter if he were here to speak in his own behalf. It is to be remembered that Peter was a modest soul. When it came to the point of martyrdom, and he was told that he was to be crucified, he insisted when he was to be nailed to the cross that it should be head downward, for he did not feel worthy to be crucified in the posture of his Lord. We may well imagine the man who could do that, if he were approached by some partisan who urged him to put in the claim that he had founded the church. One may almost hear Peter rebuking him for his officiousness, and using the word which Christ once employed for reproving him for an inconsiderate remark, *"Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."*

Christ is the Head of the church in the sense that He is its supreme Governor. As He established it at the first, so it is His word which is its law, His life which is its example, His precepts which are its inspiration, and His promises which are its eternal hope. Because Christ is the supreme Governor in His church it cannot permit any other king, or lord, or usurper, by whatever name he may be known, to rule in His seat. The Christian church is the original democracy, and is to-day the purest example of a pure democracy that exists. And careful and unbiased perusal of the Book of Acts, which is the history of the church

in formation, will sustain this verdict. One searches the New Testament in vain to discover any passage or incident which breathes the spirit of autocracy on the part of the apostles. Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Paul were all men of humble origin and simple habit. They were leaders in a great mission, and as such they were prominent in the Christian assemblies; but it was the message which made them prominent, and not any supposed inherent superiority in themselves or in their office. They did not think of themselves as masters, but merely as brethren with the brethren, and if any were servants it was the apostles themselves, who were the servants of all.

If a special claim of apostolicity were to be put forth at any time, such a time was offered when it was decided to give the apostles more time for their preaching, and appointing deacons to do work that was less important than preaching. But the record plainly shows that in the appointing of the deacons the apostles did not assume to name the deacons themselves, but rather that they called the congregation together, explained the situation to them, and then, as the Scripture reports the incident, they said to the congregation, *"Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."* (Acts 6: 4). And so the congregation assembled, and made their choice of the seven, and then the apostles sealed the choice of the congregation by the ceremony of ordination. The recently discovered Teaching of the Apostles, in its fifteenth chapter, gives a significant passage, in which this

direction is given to the church, *"Appoint then for yourselves bishops and deacons,"* which shows that at the late period when this manual of church government was issued the church was exercising self-government. All through the early years of the church there were no invidious distinctions of rank and class among the disciples. It was the first social and religious organization in which worldly discrimination was obliterated and forgotten. It was the one place where rich and poor could meet and feel that they were on an equal footing in the sight of God. The apostle James found an inclination toward favoritism creeping into some of the church assemblies, and he rebuked it in that sharp message which forbade any partiality of treatment between the man "with a gold ring, in goodly apparel," and the "poor man, in vile raiment," (James 2: 2), and directed that the one should have as good a seat as the other. High or low, rich or poor, the early church set all at the common level, and the sole distinction suffered among them was the measure in which each might exemplify the teaching of the Lord by his goodness, humility, and service. In every city where a Christian church was established the manhood of the Christian was recognized. If a poor Christian was far from home, a stranger in a strange land, he had but to report himself to any Christian congregation to find warm hearts and ready hands for his relief and comfort. Outside of these Christian congregations a slave was a chattel, a thing, to be treated or mistreated like a dumb beast. But in the Christian assemblies the slave could lift up his head and feel himself a man, and

pray and sing and prophesy with his brethren. And such forgetfulness of class distinctions was possible because Christ had taught them His love, and had instilled into their souls the joyful fellowship of Christian brotherhood.

Still it must be confessed with regret that the enthusiasm of early Christian devotion did not endure as the apostles had hoped. While the church remained poor, and persecuted, and humble in its devotion to the Master, it continued compassionate and kind to all the servants of the Master. But with the getting of riches and power there came a change. When men of wealth or of high position in the state came into the membership, when the treasury was overflowing with the gifts of the prosperous, when stately temples were erected for worship, humility was crowded out by the spirit of exclusiveness, and brotherly fellowship was smothered under the weight of pride and self-conceit. In such manner little by little new men obtained high seats in the church, magnified their authority and began to lord it over God's heritage. In the growing worldliness of the church it began to assume more and more the organization of the imperial government. In a monarchical state the worldly church became itself monarchical, and set up its hierarchy with the one responsible head. In an aristocracy the worldly church took the aristocratic form and became an oligarchy, which was able to be more tyrannical than the church with the single authority, since one man can be held for his acts, while six or a dozen escape responsibility by thrusting the blame on their associates. But in any case the church

that is organized on the monarchical or the aristocratic model is a wide departure from the simple and brotherly democracy of the primitive church. That was the pure church, the holy church, the church that would not accept any supreme Head other than Jesus Christ.

And so it was in the last century when the ministers of Scotland, who believed in a free church, took the heroic step in May of 1843 of withdrawing from the Established Church, they were returning to better acknowledgement of the Savior. We can remember how those holy men walked out of their beautiful churches, how they had to build them new churches by voluntary contribution, how they relinquished their stipends which had been paid by the state, and relied upon the benevolence of the faithful for their support, and we applaud their devout loyalty when they said, "We go out from an establishment which we loved and prized, through interference with conscience, the dishonor done to Christ's crown, and the rejection of His sole and supreme authority as King in His Church."

Recently we have seen a marvelous breaking down of thrones and a casting of crowns into the waste basket, and all abroad there is a wonderful drift from autocracy toward democracy. The main obstruction to this wholesome movement comes from two sources, which are in the extreme of social antagonism.

One is the impulse of radical democracy, the Havenothings, to reduce all society to the lowest terms by kicking off all who have something; a rule of misrule, which ends in anarchy, the paral-

ysis of industry and ultimate famine and starvation.

The other obstructive force is organized autocracy in the church, practical popery under whatever name it may be called, and which is seeking to preserve its arbitrary prerogative. With this aim it covertly or openly throws its influence in support of the monarchical tendency in the state.

The ideal for both church and state is the building up of a real democracy in religion, the acknowledgment of Christ as the supreme and only Ruler in the church, and so through the spirit of brotherhood ruling in the church to promote that brotherliness in the state, which in the last issue makes for a real democracy in theory and practice.

But Christ as the supreme Head of the church is also the Head and Source of its doctrine. This principle must be kept in view if the church wishes to preserve its doctrine sound and pure. In the apostolic writings there are frequent warnings to this effect. We are exhorted that *"We henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."* (Eph. 4:14). Again we are bidden with Timothy to *"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love."* (2 Tim. 1:12). And so Paul counsels Timothy to *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."* (1 Tim. 4:16).

This counsel has its justification in the foolish and dangerous alteration of Christian teaching, which have caused wranglings and schisms in the church from the beginning. The early church had its restless men, who wrested the faith by substituting variations of their own; men whom Paul named as "evil men, seducers;" and "false apostles, deceitful workers," and he warned the officers of the church in Ephesus of their mischievous activity, when he said to them, *"Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* His complaint to the Galatian churches,—*"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another:"*—(Gal. 1:6), might well be repeated in our day, when the faithful minister sees members of his flock following such will-o-the-wisps off into the bogs of error and unbelief.

For such deviation there is the one sovereign remedy, the remembrance that Christ is still the Source of doctrine for His church. In the words of Jesus we have the body of the revised spiritual law. He has revealed all that it is needful for us to know of the spiritual life and of the spiritual world. And the absolute test for true doctrine, for a sound gospel, is its minute and detailed agreement with the teachings of Jesus. The more nearly that it consorts with His word as reported in the first four books of the New Testament, the more certainly is it true and profitable for our spiritual progress. And the more that any professedly Christian teaching diverges from the words of Jesus, the more certainly may we know

it for error, even though it be taught by seemingly good men; and whenever it goes to the length of presenting some novelty as a substitute for his teaching, the more are we privileged to condemn and denounce it as anti-Christ.

Christ is the Head of the church and accordingly is the Friend of the believer. The earnest and faithful disciple comes into the closest touch with his Lord. The relation is one of intimate communion. Said Jesus the last night before He went to the cross, *"Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."* (John 15:15). The relation between Christ and the faithful soul is one of mutual confidence and reliance. There is a mystical union between the spirit of Christ and the Christian, so that Christ can depend on the disciple, and the disciple can depend on his Lord. Luther has said of this union with Jesus, "By faith thou art so glued to Christ that of thee and him there becomes as it were one person, so that with confidence thou canst say, 'I am Christ;' that is 'Christ's righteousness, victory, etc., are mine.' "

But Christ as Head of the church is its able Protector. This He is for the individual Christian and also for the church collectively. He is the Protector against all the enemies that may arise to assail the church. If ever in the world it might have been possible to overthrow the church it must have been in the day of its weakness, while it was still young and in the period of formation. Then there were marshalled against it the influ-

ence of Judaism, with its crass hatred of Jesus; the power of the Roman state that was persecuting the faith and making Christian martyrs in the amphitheatre, and the ridicule of the philosophers who sought to deride the new movement out of existence. But not all these forces in combination could stay the progress of a conquering gospel. Julian the apostate emperor exerted all his vast powers to suppress Christian preaching and restore the glory of the old heathen ceremonial, but after all his efforts he confessed his failure in the dismal lament, "Galilean, thou hast conquered."

At the end of the eighteenth century there was a great stampede of the learned and influential toward Deism and atheism. Voltaire, the keenest mind of his age, turned his scathing satire and vitriolic sarcasm against the church as he knew it, and which was well deserving of much of the abuse it received. But what was the result? Did the church perish? Far from it. For the critic helped it to revise its ways and it became stronger than ever. For every writer who assailed the faith there were a dozen who were its champions. The objections to Christianity were sifted by able debaters and disproved in the judgment of the intelligent who followed the course of the great disputation. And of the attacks of Voltaire it may be said that the very press which printed his books in Geneva was afterward employed for printing the Bible.

But Christ is the Protector of His church against losses. All down the ages there have been great leaders who have exercised an amazing in-

fluence for the welfare of the church. They have preached the gospel with force and power. They have been wise in their measures of administration. They have won the ardent devotion of Christian believers, and the respect of others outside the church. Sometimes it has seemed that some of these men were essential to the existence of the faith, and when they have been taken away by death, the shock to the church has seemed more than it was able to bear. The heart of the church has almost ceased to beat. How was ever such a loss to the church as that of Stephen to be repaired? Or of Paul? Or Timothy? Or John? Or a Luther? Or Wesley? Or Moody? Or a multitude of others who might be named? But they passed from labor to reward, and the church still lived on. Christ raised up other helpers in their place and the gospel kept right on undismayed. And so shall it be evermore. Nothing shall defeat Christ's purpose in His kingdom. As He said to His disciples, *"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* (Matt. 28:20).

And Christ is the Protector of the church against all the forces of decay and disintegration. Almost all human institutions have their periods of growth, which are followed by decline. So religions have flourished only to wilt and vanish away. Time and change have reduced their vitality, so that other cults have come to the fore and won the popular favor. No such dismal fate is to befall the church which Christ founded, and which is the object of His tender care. Let the centuries come and go, and still the same needs and yearnings of the human heart which have given Chris-

tianity its strong appeal will continue to urge men to the cross. The high standards of truth and justice and humanity which have drawn the world's trust will still incline men to the Savior. At this moment the principles of the faith have a deeper grip upon human society and include a larger number of souls than has ever been known in the history of the world. This is the record in the lands of the highest civilization. And the statement holds true of the non-Christian lands. Only the other day a missionary in India wrote home that the natives were clamoring for teachers, and so anxious were they for schools for their children that whole villages were joining in the cry and saying that if we would send them teachers they would all become Christians. And so Christ and His church are overcoming the world.

While this is true it behooves ourselves to see to it that He has full control of us; that He rules in our hearts by faith; that we love, and serve, and adore Him, so that with us and the rest of the world it may ever stand that

> "His power increasing still shall spread,
> His reign no end shall know:
> Justice shall guard His throne above,
> And peace abound below."

THE KING OF KINGS

XI.

THE KING OF KINGS

THE Book of Revelation stands among the other books of the New Testament with an interest that is quite its own. The reader here will miss the straightforward discourses and narratives of the Gospels, as well as the practical admonitions of the epistles. In their place John, the author, presents a shifting panorama of dissolving views; the marshalling of hosts, the rush and turbulence of battle, the judgment of the wicked, and the joy of the righteous in the triumph of their Lord.

As one follows these chapters he may possibly appreciate the feeling of the devout Jew, who in the prophetic time attempted to catch the drift of some fragment of Isaiah, or Ezekiel, or Malachi. What kingdom would this be which is to fill the whole earth? What victory is this, when the mountain of the Lord shall be full of praise? Who is he that shall sit as refiner of silver and purify the sons of Levi? Reading such predictions the old-time Jew must have been awed by a sense of the divine Majesty, and at the same time bewildered by a sense of unreality. Of course there was unreality, for the prophecy was a vision. And visions differ from the event precisely as a picture differs from the object which it portrays. At the best it can only represent and suggest.

Some such feeling, though in larger degree, the reader who follows John will experience, as the apostle leads to the mountain of Christian prophecy. For he opens up wider fields of contest, and paints with intenser shades, and on a grander scale. But though his tints are brilliant many a Christian has found the outline dim. He is baffled as he searches for the details which will enable him to fix events and determine personages. And there need be no wonder that this is so. For the Revelation is a prophecy for every age, for the age of the primitive church, for our age, and for all the ages yet to come. Indeed, it is probable that no man will ever understand the Revelation in its completeness until time shall end, and all that God is working out in the earth by way of discipline and development has been achieved.

The character of the Revelation is an outgrowth of the conditions of the time. When John was composing it the churches were in great need of cheer. The hour of the Roman persecution had struck, and hatred of the Christians, long repressed, was whetting its sword for vengeance. John himself had been dragged away from his congregations in Ephesus and exiled to the lonely desolation of Patmos. Nero Caesar soon was to rage with all the fury of a mad beast, and the remnant of the faithful was to be driven to the wilderness. For the comfort of believers who are to seal their hope in Christ with martyr blood, John gives his assurance that tyrants will rave and persecute in vain, that the sword shall not destroy the people of God, and that the real ruler of all world powers

is to be the conquering Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords forevermore.

And that confident declaration is profitable to the church of to-day. For there are battles and struggles now as there have been from the beginning. Sin is a smothered conflagration and is constantly breaking out in flame where least suspected. Civilization which breeds new diseases also propagates new temptations. If the faith of the church was once sorely tried by enthroned oppression it is tried no less by vice and inefficiency seated in the place of power and holding a protecting hand over iniquity, which in consequence is enabled to scoff at the helplessness of the righteous. As they behold the wicked growing bolder in their wickedness they cry, "How long, O Lord, how long!" When base men are exalted there is question whether Satan is to hold every citadel. True the history of nineteen Christian centuries declares that sin cannot prosper, but it is a help to have a sure word of God to confirm our trust.

And that is the purpose and content of the Revelation. Employing the most effective and the most impressive symbols, John advances to the final consummation and pronounces the absolute triumph of righteousness. Early in the book he shows the hosts of heaven riding forth to the final conflict. Each soldier of God rides a white horse and is robed in fine linen, clean and white. At their head rides their leader, Jesus, the Word of God. Here is a place for consideration of the symbolic language which John employs. In classic art the deities of mythology were represented in association with conventional symbols, which

marked the province and character of each divinity. The painters called these devices "attributes." The attributes of Mercury were the cadeucus and the winged sandals. The attributes of Venus were the snowy doves of Paphos. The attributes of Neptune were the trident and the dolphins. The attributes of Jupiter were the eagle and the thunderbolts. Similarly the attributes which John ascribed to Jesus are indicative of conquest. The white horse signified victory. His eyes were as a flame of fire: they were flaming with omnipotence. On His head were many crowns, the type of universal jurisdiction. The sharp sword, the winepress of wrath, and the numberless host which followed Him, all speak of a resistless onset. And the inscription on His vesture and His thigh was a pledge to the same effect, that He was to be the ruler of rulers, to whom every knee should bow.

The King of Kings. This title is a declaration of His present glory. It is profitable for Christians to recognize the divine royalty of the Lord. Many incline to think of Him mainly as He appeared in the day of humiliation. It is right that men should not forget the suffering Savior. There is a side of our nature to which the gospel appeals with great effect. No man can love Christ as he should till he sees that the Lord has done much, and that He has done much for him. It is the atoning Christ, the Christ of Calvary who moves our hearts to the profoundest depths and converts the world. But also to properly understand the atoning Christ one must realize who and what Christ had been. It is impossible to

estimate what He did for us in His humiliation until He is seen in His former exaltation. For this sufferer was not man, nor was He an angel. A man might have been maltreated like Jesus, but his trials would not move us in the same way. Peter and Paul suffered, both of them. Both lived a lifetime of trial, and both were martyred. Peter was crucified and Paul was beheaded. But while they stooped to suffer, they did not stoop so low as Jesus, for He stooped from heaven. To realize in its extent the voluntary suffering of Jesus in our behalf it is needful to remember that it was the Lord from heaven who stood submissive in the judgment hall of Pilate, and that it was the Creator of the worlds whom rude soldiers mocked and crucified.

But furthermore, for a clear understanding of Jesus the church is to perceive that our Lord's humiliation ceased at once from the moment when He exclaimed on the cross, "It is finished." Count if you will His thirty-four years on the earth, and in comparison with the eternities before and after it will stand as the merest parenthesis, and of that parenthesis His great abasement was for a single day. Just for one day men might do with Him as they pleased, but when that day was done the humiliation was done and He resumed the throne of heaven. The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the sorrow laden Messiah, but still with Isaiah He was the prince in heaven, and the sufferer only here on the earth. And yet it is the prince whom Isaiah sees mainly, the prince who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. He treads the winepress alone, and the scarlet stain is upon His

apparel. As a prince He is glorious, speaking in righteousness, traveling in the greatness of His strength.

And this is the view which John presents, for he assumes in the Revelation from first to last the present royalty of Jesus. In the opening vision Christ walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, a present ruler and helper to the churches. And it is a master like that whom we serve, the exalted, the glorified Christ. He occupies now the throne of the heavens. Angels now are casting their crowns before Him and worshipping at His feet. And at this hour He is ruling among the nations, working out His plans for the final triumph of righteousness.

Jesus is King of Kings in the glory of His transcendent nature. How significant is that expression, the duplication of the title, which means that He is not merely a king, to rank beside rulers and potentates, but King of Kings, outranking the mightiest of them all. It is well to see Him in this position, for there is a kind of sturdy republicanism in our blood which inclines us to feel, as kings go, that we are about as good as the best of them. We happen to know how kings are made. Some of the early ones were good for something, for they could at least wield a club or thrust with a spear. Among the primitive tribes it was the strong man who made his way to the front. Homer calls Agamemnon king of men. We can believe it, for when Schliemann uncovered Agamemnon's tomb at Mycenae he found from his bones that he was about eight feet high, a man of gigantic stature. But as for the

later kings, many of them have been of small account. They have owed their eminence to the accident of birth or to a revolution. Now and then a king happens to be good, like Arthur of the Round Table, or Alfred the Great, or Albert of Belgium; but the many have been the scum of the earth like Nero and Caligula; imbeciles like the Sluggard Kings of France; votaries of pleasure like the Second Charles of England; butchers of men like Tamarlane, and Bonaparte, and William of Hohenzollern; or men demented, like that George the Third of revolutionary memory. To such rulers we may bow from compulsion, but not always then. You may recall the valorous act of Algernon Sidney, when he was quartered at the French court in the reign of Louis XIV, who was known as the Grand Monarch. He was riding with the king one day in the hunt, when the king expressed his admiration of Sidney's horse, which was the finest in all the train. When the sport was over Louis sent an officer to ask Sidney the price of his horse. Such a royal tender according to custom was equivalent to a command, but Sidney, to the general surprise, answered that his horse was not for sale. But Louis was determined to have the animal in the royal stables and so bade his officer take a great sum in gold, give it to Sidney, and bring back the horse. This might have been supposed to have ended the matter, but not so at all. For Sidney, when he saw that the king would go to any length to possess the animal, drew his pistol and shot the horse dead. Then he bade the messenger go back and tell his royal master, "My horse was born a free creature. He has served a

free master, and shall not be mastered by a king of slaves."

But the best of all men can serve Christ, for whatever our rank or position He still towers far above us. Search we may for the noblest souls that ever wrought a noble act, or ever engaged in a noble enterprise, and they will be the ones who are most ready to bow before the name of Jesus. A Paul carries the gospel into the centers of paganism; a Polycarp prefers to be burned at the stake rather than drop a few grains of incense upon an idolatrous altar; a Bunyan spends ten years of his precious life in jail for conscience' sake; a Howard devotes his career to ameliorating the dismal fate of the prisoner; and all of these were true kings and better far than many of their day who sat the throne. But Christ transcends them all. It is their delight to do His will. Because He is matchless in goodness and love, such men are ready to exclaim, "Crown Him, Crown Him, Crown the Savior King of Kings."

And Christ is King of kings inasmuch as He is the arbiter of eternal destiny. What can these men be thinking of the life to come, the men who are dressed in a little brief authority, and who are so puffed with their pride of wealth or station that they go driving rough-shod over the rest of the world? It is well for them to be thinking of it, for the end is close at hand. The grave is gaping for the king as well as for the beggar. The Lord has taught that the new life will disclose some strange reversals in position. Here Lazarus sat outside the rich man's gate, but over there he is to be the bosom friend of Abraham. Here Dives

was rich, and prosperous, and respectable. He moved in the highest circles. People of all sorts and conditions came to him for counsel. He exercised the influence that grows out of the power to give or to withhold. He sipped the rarest wines, he spread the most bountiful table and occupied the statliest house in town. But all that was on the earth, and when he arrived on the other side he was destitute of the riches that were current there, and so he became the beggar. And the reversal that the Lord described was so complete, that not only had Dives become the beggar, but he had to beg of Lazarus. Of a truth that new life will record a disturbing come-down for the mighty. If ever Constantine, and Charlemagne, and the Guises, and the Plantagenets, and the Bourbons, and the Hanoverians, and the Hohenzollerns get to heaven, it will be like ourselves, on their knees. Once Christ was sent to Herod, and Herod sent Him back to Pilate, but over there Christ will be on the throne and Herod must stand before Him for judgment. Once Christ was arraigned before Pilate, and the politician surrendered Him to the cross. But Pilate is to stand before Jesus; Jesus the Judge, Pilate the suppliant. There are men and women now who are hesitating about accepting the gospel. Their better impulses are urging them to go to Jesus, but their worse impulses block the way. Do they reflect sufficiently upon the fact that soon the only law under which they can live is the one that they are holding at arm's length? In heaven the law of the land is Christ's gospel. And what is more, Christ Himself is the Judge to interpret the law,

and He is also the King to enforce that law. It is therefore the part of wisdom to submit to that law here and now, so that when the new life opens those who are hesitating will have thrust aside all their procrastinations and may appear as faithful friends and loyal subjects of the King.

But John's thought of Jesus as King of Kings is that He is King in His present kingdom, and that the supreme ruler of the nations is the teacher who was crucified. He presents the view that Christ is now present on the earth, present in His church, as a comfort to the martyrs, and to encourage the faithful to the end of time. He is with us, moving in the world with commanding power. Some there are who do not understand this, and have the idea, because He ascended before the eyes of His disciples to heaven, that He is leaving the world to its own devices. When Charles I was contending with the Long Parliament, and the Commons offered him some specially humiliating proposition, he replied, "If I granted your demands, I should be no more than a mere phantom of a king." Our King is no phantom. He exercises lordship, and no man or body of men can oppose Him effectively. In the Book of Acts is the story of a man who was begging at the gate of the temple when Peter and John were going up to pray. He asked alms of Peter, but Peter was a poor preacher and had no money to give, but lacking money, he gave the man what was much better. Fixing his eyes on the man he said, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*" And Christ so rules in the world that He granted

power to that man to walk, and he went home walking, leaping, and praising God.

What Jesus did for the man He is doing for the world. The history of progress for twenty centuries is the history of the progress of the Gospel. One may take his map and trace the missionary journeys of the apostles, and their successors, and as he follows them from province to province he will see the light of life increasing in its radiance, happiness more general and more assured, liberty developed, and all the arts and sciences opening out like the blossoms of the Springtide. And these promising results have been obtained under the most adverse conditions. Governments have lifted the opposing hand, ignorance and vice have united their forces to block the way, but the Gospel and civilization have taken their forward course, hand in hand; and the seat of the highest civilization has regularly been the seat of the purest gospel faith. How shall this progress be explained? There is but one explanation. Christ has been carrying forward His work, blessing the ardent desires of His servants, and ruling in all as King of heaven, and King of the earth no less.

But Christ is King in a definite kingdom, the boundaries of which we can see, and within which His voice is dominant and supreme even now. It is very noticeable how this idea of Christ's royalty, and His headship over a kingdom pervades the New Testament, which might well be named the proclamation of the kingdom. For the prophecy which the wise men interpreted to Herod's dismay declared that Christ was to be born in

Bethlehem as King of the Jews. Three kings of the east bowed in the stable before the infant Jesus, and offered Him royal gifts, because they honored Him as King of the Jews. The Sermon on the Mount is an elaborate code of precepts and regulations for the government of the kingdom which Jesus was come to establish. The Lord recited wonderful parables in which He expounded the principles of His kingdom. Repeatedly He spoke of His kingdom, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. The Jews accused Him for calling Himself a king. Over His cross Pilate had nailed *"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."* All the epistles are commentaries on the growth and the obligations of Christ's kingdom. And the Revelation all the way through is a dissertation on the conflicts of the kingdom and its ultimate triumph. The New Jerusalem, which John sees, descending as a bride adorned for her husband, is the church, which Paul had spoken of as the bride, the Lamb's wife. When men speak as they sometimes do with sneers at the church, it would seem that they are not familiar with the teaching of the New Testament about that same church. The New Testament declares the Christ founded the church, that He ordained its apostles and teachers, that He summoned its membership by the voice of the Holy Spirit. When one sees Christ living for this kingdom, the church; dying for this kingdom, the church; sealing this kingdom, the church, with His own precious blood, it must be believed that in the divine counsels, whether men see the reason for it or not, the church is a divine necessity.

And our King is the master of an exclusive kingdom. Christianity is the religion. The heathen in the old day complained of this faith that it was too aggressive. They were willing to offer a niche in their Pantheon for a statue of Jesus, or a cross, or any other emblem that the Christians might prefer; but the Christians would have none of their Pantheon till the whole place was cleared of its idols and consecrated exclusively for Christian worship. Here may be found a subtle distinction. Christianity teaches toleration, that every man shall be permitted to think as he pleases, but it is at the same time the most intolerant of all religions, for it admits of no competitor with Jesus. There is no room in a Christian church for an idol. The gods of the heathen are no gods. There is but one God whom we worship, and one Lord Jesus Christ whom we adore.

But our King reaches out the scepter of His favor to all peoples. All who come in penitence and faith are to be saved. The path to glory is plain so that no man need to err therein. The door to the kingdom is open and no man is excluded unless he excludes himself. The Bible is the guide book which points the way, and whoever believes the Book and permits it to lead him to Christ will have all the promises and the protection of the King of Kings.

But some man is disinclined to accept this Bible and follow this Christ. On what will such a man base his hope for the hereafter? Surely not on the Bible, for he discards it. Not on Christ, for he turns his back on the Redeemer. On what then can he rely? Is it on a supposition and a conjec-

ture that somehow or other, though he does not imagine how, there may be mercy for the impenitent? But is not that a doubtful basis of trust, a rash experiment? A man is sitting on a barrel of gunpowder. Loose grains of the powder are strewn over the head of the cask. He scratches a match to light his pipe. Rash enough that is, but not so rash as to face eternity with no attention to the law that Christ has set for His kingdom. A man has gone down the face of a precipice by a rope on some errand to a ledge below. Presently he starts to return, pulling himself up hand over hand. Half way up he stops and looks down. Far down runs that flush wall of flinty rock, with here and there a tiny shrub clinging to some crevice, and at the bottom trickles a brooklet like a thread of silver gleaming in the sunlight. While still suspended there, hanging to that rope with one hand, with the other he draws a knife and opens out the blade with his teeth, and reaching up he cuts one strand of the rope. As it gives way it sets him swinging. Still reaching up he cuts a second strand. Is that a rash experiment? But it is not so rash as for a man on the verge of eternity to cut off his hold on faith, on the one cord that holds strongly and certainly on eternal life.

The wise man in this matter of the future does not desire to rest on ifs and perhaps-es. Rather far does he give ear to the word of life in Christ Jesus. He will be happy to serve the Master in His kingdom, even though it be to take the humblest seat, so long as he is able to claim Him as King and Lord. For who serves Christ now

possesses Him forever. Who follows His standards in the conflict marches with Him in the triumph. Who bows before Him now, He will receive and acknowledge in the kingdom of His glory.

CHRIST'S DEMAND ON THIS AGE

XII.

CHRIST'S DEMAND ON THIS AGE

WE are rejoicing in the unquestioned victory for democracy. The common people who have been neglected through the ages are at last coming to their own. The Old World is wearing a new face. Of a truth old things are passed away. Not merely have thrones by the double dozen been toppled over into the abyss, but also along with them go antiquated customs, moss-grown privileges, and prerogatives, dank and mouldy theories of society and government, and silly traditions of a by-gone time.

New names to-day are on the public lip, new nations are defiling on the stage of action, the cartographers are busily engraving new maps of Middle Europe and the East, new men are coming into control of affairs, and new principles are guiding in public policy.

Amid these far-reaching changes the questions stare us in the face as to how far we dare consider the victory for democracy as a victory for Christ; what demands it will make upon the church of Christ, and what the prospects are for the kingdom as the outgrowth of this splendid victory.

First of all, since democracy has won its victory, we are to infer that its ancient enemy has suffered defeat; that autocracy, and the spirit of militarism, of brute violence, on which autocracy has

always leaned as its main support, has been vanquished.

The extent of this memorable defeat is to be measured by five decisive counts. The great war has been a defeat for Germany in that it carried the reversal of a sanguine expectation. For a half century the ruling class and the military clique of Germany acting together have been occupied in a premeditated and systematic preparation for war. They had turned every interest and every resource of the empire, the powers of government, all social influence, all interests of education, industry, and religion, so that each should contribute its full share toward the military preparation. The whole nation as well as the army had been drilled into a state of confident expectation that the coming war would be one of victory to Germany, and that the pecuniary profit in the way of indemnities would be staggering to their foes and of immense advantage to the Fatherland. France, which they counted as their chief enemy, was to be "bled white." She was to be forced to pay a subsidy so huge as to cripple her for generations. Just that outcome of the great war was contemplated by Germany, and hardly a voice was lifted anywhere in the realm to protest against letting loose such an enormity on the world. From the Kaiser on the throne down to Kurtz and Klein in the rank and file of the army the prospective campaign was regarded more in the light of a picnic than a war, and when the word was given to march, the legions poured forward with joyous step and hilarious expectation. Many of the officers were wearing their sprucest uniforms, for

they were sure that the celebration of victory was to come soon. Many of the men carried postcards, which had been printed in great quantities, announcing a victory, on which it was necessary only to inscribe the address and the name of the writer. Prominent generals had ready at hand the list of guests to be invited to the triumphal banquet which was to be served in Paris within a few weeks. But all this glowing picture of success, this sanguine expectation of a walk-over was beaten to a frazzle at the first battle of the Marne, when the German forces were outgeneraled by the English and French, and driven back to the banks of the Somme, to fight for years against odds which were piling up against them with every day that the fighting was protracted. Still the German high command continued feeding their people with falsified intelligence, representing every slight advance as a great victory, and every retreat as a strategical retirement, so that up to the very last the German people were trusting that their victory was assured. It was defeat for certain when Germany discovered that in place of receiving indemnities she was to settle for her devastations to the full limit of her capacity to pay.

The war was a defeat for Germany from the moral aspect, and especially so for the Prussian part of the empire, since it revealed the depth of their callous wickedness. The military class had been declaring new doctrines of war, "Military necessity," which was excuse for any act however horrible that might give a military advantage; and "frightfulness," which was interpreted as the

merciful measure which would bring about the more speedy capitulation of a stubborn enemy. In consequence of this barbaric indoctrination the leading classes, and then presently the entire population became habituated to these abhorrent opinions, and suffered a lapse from the moral and religious restraints which prevail among civilized nations. No such persistent and systematized falsification in official documents and in communications to the press has been practiced before by any nation. The conduct of officers of the German army offers examples of the violation of every law, international, civil, or divine, including the breach of solemn treaties, the wholesale and useless destruction of property, the enslavement of entire populations, and the wanton murder of the innocent and helpless to an extent unparalleled in any civilized nation for generations. And what if anything is still worse, the perpetrators of these atrocities were applauded and honored by high and low, as if they had been engaged in some honorable exploit. For her patronage of such atrocities the conscience of the world has judged Germany guilty, and generations must elapse before the stain on her escutcheon can be erased.

The war has brought defeat to Germany in the puncturing of her over inflated pretensions. In all the modern world Germany and Austria have stood as the special sponsors for caste and privilege. In these two nations feudalism, which had been modified elsewhere, remained honored and enthroned. Imperalism in both lands was exalted to the extreme and the royal prerogative and the exclusive rights and immunities of the nobility

were hedged about against the encroachments of the commoner by every possible safeguard. The prince, the duke, the baron, the count, in Germany and Austria were rated as immeasurably superior to the commoner, and were supposably above him also in intellectual and moral power. All this we know well was pure nonsense and moonshine, but the Kaisers and the princes taught it to the commoner as law and gospel, and kept on teaching it till they almost believed it themselves. But the war has pricked that bubble, and in the titanic struggle many a common man proved himself stronger, braver, and of better capacity to think and accomplish than many a nobleman before whom he had been bowing and cringing all his life long.

The war was a defeat for Germany in uncovering her capacity for fatuous stupidity. This was apparent in the planning of the war itself. For the notion that Germany was capable of overpowering all the rest of the world was in itself a stupid presumption. And her espousal of the doctrines of "military necessity" and of "frightfulness" was of the same order. The age had outgrown such barbarities. They were in defiance of the divine law, and to put them into execution was practically to engage in fighting against God. And it is ever the fool who lifts his hand against God. But the strange and almost unaccountable misreading of the mind of other nations, which was practiced by German diplomats and statesmen before and during the struggle betrays a stolid stupidity which belongs in a class by itself. It was the idea of Germany that France was decadent, while to

the contrary the national spirit was strong. It was her notion if she spread barbaric devastation in Northern France, the France that was left would surrender tamely rather than risk enduring such a fate, but the result proved that every such act of atrocity made France the more resolved to win or perish. It was the German idea that England cared more for commercial gain than for her treaty obligations, and that English colonies would seize the first chance of a war to desert the mother country. Germany made a like blunder in her estimation of America. She imagined that the German-Americans here, of whom we had some twenty millions, would prevent America from resenting her depredations and insults, and that America herself would be too busy selling supplies and munitions to belligerents to pay any attention to German acts of aggression. This mistake was almost of the nature of imbecility. For America did resent German aggressions, and German-Americans fought alongside of all sorts of Americans in Belgium and France, and German-Americans subscribed along with other Americans for every issue of Liberty Bonds. All these psychological misinterpretations by the German publicists were among the fatalities that lost them the war, and their misinterpretations of America were the most fatal of them all.

The war was a defeat for Germany inasmuch as it proved the weakness of her supposedly perfect military system. For years Germany had been arrogating to herself the position of being the final authority in research, in art, in philosophy, in theology, and in military science. In all these depart-

ments she posed as supreme and estimated all others as sheer pretenders. Her dictum in the intellectual realm was to be accepted without question, for whatever was under debate she knew it all. Some of our preachers who should have known better were under the glamour of this influence and presented their congregations with explanations of Holy Scripture that were "made in Germany." And so, many of our educational institutions were simple enough to accept Germany's valuation of herself, and followed blindly in her lead in the making up of their educational courses. It presently became the general view of a philosophical or a theological opinion, if it originated in Germany, that it must have solid foundation, and to oppose it would be to expose one's ignorance and incompetency. But the war has exploded this notion of German perfections. When England, France, and America put their hands to the task, they turned out as capable ships, and guns, and air ships, and sailors, and soldiers as any that Germany could muster; and so much better than Germany could muster, that the German High Command a year before the crash came saw the handwriting on the wall. They realized that their boasted system after all was inferior to that of the Allies, and that no hope was left for them in their long range guns, or their Hindenburg lines, and that they must search for some easy means of pacification. And so they made an approach to President Wilson to interpose in their behalf. But they did not make their overture man fashion, but secretly and under cover, so that if it happened to be turned down they could deny having

made any such overture. Of course such an underhanded maneuvre was rejected, as it richly deserved, and they had to continue their fighting. But finally they could not conceal their dire condition from the rank and file of their army, and this time they besought an armistice in the approved manner and their pleas were granted. And so they marched out of Belgium and France cowed, humiliated, defeated, and with their soldiery sometimes reckless and rebellious. And Germany, which had been befogged all these years by systematic falsification, was stunned by this stroke as if she had been smitten by a thunderbolt from a clear sky. And to this hour there are many of the German people who refuse to acknowledge that they were defeated in the field, and they plaintively assure us that they finally yielded in their merciful desire to prevent further destruction of cities and effusion of blood.

This great victory brings us release from the long nightmare of strife and confusion, and particularly from the dread of enslavement which men and nations must suffer had Germany been successful in her ambitious enterprise. All through the tedious struggle, till the decisive moment arrived, thoughtful men were asking what might happen were Germany to win. Some things might be predicted, were such a deplorable event to occur. Could she have won she would have been master of Central Europe and of the far east. In a short time she would have had under her control material for making an army of a hundred million men, by whose might she would have had the world at her feet. That would have meant

nothing less than practical enslavement for all. She would have wrung a tribute from the free nations that would have impoverished them. One has only to recall what happened in Brussels and Antwerp to realize what would have happened in Paris, in London, and in New York, could the Kaiser have planted there his conquering foot. From such a calamity to freedom God in His mercy has spared us. But there is much more than that in this victory. Nations which have long groaned under the heel of feudalism can now draw a long breath without applying for permission to the police or to the throne. It has also brought the dismissal of a degrading prejudice. In many countries the common man has been just a common man and nothing more. Those above him have despised him and crowded him down. They were kinder to a pet dog than to the shopkeeper, the saddler, or the man who tilled the soil. The man at the bottom, cowed by the superciliousness of his "betters," came at length to be what they thought him. But now along with the thrones that have vanished the old idea has gone also. A new manhood is springing to life all through Central Europe and a new sense of freedom. The victory has demolished the barriers of caste, barriers which have been the curse of the old order. Those grades of nobility, so-called, ennobled the few, but at the expense of the many, whom they debased. They separated rank from rank, and cultivated the traits of snobbish exclusiveness, arrogance, violence, and contempt toward all in a lower walk, and at the same time bred a fawning servility and a cringing subjection in the higher

class toward those above them, all of which detract from the character of freemen. As it has been, class has been segregated from class, and even the children in Germany have been partitioned off into four different classes of schools, each of them accepting only such and such social grades, the members of which might not sit in the same classes with those from the other class of schools, nor to play with such in the same playground. Artificial divisions like this do not consort with the free air of our age, and the victory of democracy is rapidly making them obsolete.

The victory also opens wide the door of opportunity which in the countries we have been speaking of have been barred close and strictly guarded against the intrusion of the common man. The lower classes in these countries have been crowded into their own place, sometimes by long standing custom, sometimes by violence. The peasant has been obliged to remain a peasant, the artisan to stick to his own trade, and none of these could by any chance secure a commission in the army, which was held to be the exclusive privilege of noble blood. Up to within a few years any Austrian or German of the lower class, if he wished to rise in the world, was compelled to emigrate to some other country, preferably to America; for America it is that smiles upon the ambitious spirit, and lends him a hand instead of crowding him down. The victory in this sense was a boon to the struggling classes. The four years of warfare has been an education to many a man. Some of venturesome spirit have dared strongly, and in emergency have attained successes that have

brought awakened intelligence. As a result there are many who are nursing hopes and aspirations in whom all thought had seemed to be dead.

As the great victory is interpreted in this manner it will be observed to have a special bearing and significance on the church of Christ. It gives to the church an instructive lesson. This lesson will be in part a warning. Because old things are passed away and all things are become new, the church must meet the issues of the new time. We are undergoing a general course of reconstruction, in social life and in governmental relations. It is impossible then for us to imagine that the Divine Powers will be content to let the church jog along contentedly in the old-time way.

Coupled with the warning comes the call to action. The first word in the Great Commission is Go! And it is the imperative word, since there could be no discipling the nations if all the church were to sit in idleness at home. In this new age the church is to be alive and doing, alert for the immediate duty and eager to make every factor tell for the progress of the kingdom.

The victory brings us face to face with several imperative demands.

To begin with, the church must arouse herself from her narrow parochialism and lay out a substantial world program. Can it be true, as some allege, that we have been lingering in a state of sanctimonious pettiness? Can it be true that we have been thinking in terms of the neighborhood and the parish, and that we have been satisfied with keeping the street of morality clean before our own door? It is much to do that, to live

plainly and purely, to keep one's personal character stainless and our conduct a stimulating example to others, to have the congregation active in good works, the Sunday School a real school with modern methods and equipment, to have the meetings for social worship interesting and inspiring, and all connected with the place so breezy and cheerful as to make it a constant delight to be there. And to be that happy and prosperous and helpful to the life of the community has completed the anxious desire of many a faithful pastor and his devoted people. But that measure will not suffice for this new age. The war has forced us out of the old isolation and compels the wider view. We have had to provide for the physical and moral welfare of the soldier boys in the camps at home and in the trenches abroad. We have had our share in saving the starving populations of Belgium, Armenia, and Roumania. We have participated as far as we were permitted in the Peace Council at Versailles, and have followed the development of discussions which have involved the future of newly born nations with anxions solicitude. And after having been engaged thus for years in fighting for a world-wide democracy and in arranging for the settlement of world-wide problems, Americans and the American church can never get back into the old, narrow way. We are the part of a vast and world-wide movement. Our responsibility henceforth has the world-wide perspective. Our program must be drawn to the broad, the world-wide scale.

The victory will demand that our world-wide program be devoted to measures that are practical

in preference to those that are purely theological and theoretical. The experience of the war made this clear in the most emphatic way. So long as we halted to debate the ways and means, as to how we should fight and who should command this sector and that, our campaign went haltingly and the advantage lay with the enemy. But when stern necessity impelled us to the saner mood we pooled all our resources, unified our armies under a single command, dropped the foolishness of debate and discussion, and concentrated all thought and action to moving upon the enemy's works. Then it was from July to October that something definite was accomplished. Every day there was advance somewhere, and when the foe was watching for the moment that we would halt to catch our breath we were driving him out of his defences and forcing him to make his masterly strategic movement in the direction of Berlin. There we have the example for the church of to-day. We have no time now to waste over questions of ceremony and ritual; no time to waste over questions whether a deacon shall be elected to serve for one year or for a lifetime; no time to waste over insignificant matters of any sort. The one pressing and immediate question is to find our place and work in the Lord's army, the one immediate and important thing which the Lord intrusts to our hands; and having found it, to do just that with all our might and main, and to do it now.

Our victory demands that we assemble and put to best use all our unused forces and resources. The war gave us that lesson also. We Americans have been the most prodigal people on the face of

the earth. It has been told of us on both sides of the water that a French mother could feed her whole family on what the American mother throws to the pigs. Of course that is an exaggeration, but it carries a semblance of truth. And we have been just as wasteful as that with the discarded material of transportation and of warfare. But along in the course of the war, when food was falling short and there was not shipping enough left on the surface of the sea to meet the demands for cargo space, we undertook at once a systematic campaign of reclamation. Wherever we had any iron to scrap over there we collected it and sent it to French foundries to be recast into shells and guns. Discarded uniforms were overhauled, and what was saved out of two or three suits was made over into one. Old shoes were cobbled and made better than new. In that way our armies were trained in economy and thrift. But do we realize how much material has been lying unused or going to waste in the Lord's kingdom? In many churches the main burden has been carried by a faithful few, while the many, able men and women, have fulfilled their religious responsibility by paying their pew rent and getting out to church when the weather was suitable, or it was otherwise convenient. It is a fair estimate that less than twenty per cent. of our church membership has been really active, and that over eighty per cent. has been watching to see how well the others could work. The new age demands that these unused forces be mobilized, and that intelligent leadership shall plan judiciously for bringing them into action.

The victory demands of the church that her activities be unified constructively. This is far from saying that we should have at once organic union for the whole church, of Protestants, Greek Catholics and Roman Catholics. Recently a delegation of enthusiastic Protestants paid a visit to the pope to tender him a proposition for Christian union. It is reported that he lent them a willing ear. He believes in the reunion of all Christendom, and he was kind enough to point out to the delegation that the simple and effective way to fulfil their desire was for all the schismatic and disunited brethren to return to the welcoming bosom of the mother church. It is to be expected, however, that the mother church will find it necessary to let down several lofty bars before that mellifluous invitation can meet with general acceptance. And there are also many barriers which obstruct the organic union of many of the Protestant bodies, which are now working together amicably in many departments of Christian service. And other ways are offered in which our forces may be unified. During the war British, French, Italian, and American forces fought side by side. The British were responsible to British generals, the French to their French generals, and the Americans to American generals, but these obligations of national allegiance did not hinder their complete co-operation in pursuit of their objective. And in the church co-operation, intelligent and fraternal co-operation should be the watchword. In the Cleveland Convention of the Federal Council of Churches, 1919, Dr. Hubert Herring, in the course of his magnificent address,

scored what he termed "our ragged sectarianism." He was alluding to our denominational divisions and rivalries and over-lappings, and the consequent waste of men and resources. And indeed our losses in this manner have been incalculable. When we forget our differences and labor side by side as the Lord's servants under command of the one Lord and Savior, we shall find more results for our efforts and more joy in our chosen tasks.

Our victory demands that we make adequate provision in resources and men for our common enterprise, which, as has been seen, is of world-wide extent. Europe is now calling for constructive Christian teaching. China, Japan, the entire far east, all of them are lifting up the Macedonian cry. To meet the demand there must be ample supply. For this the old-fashioned penny collection will not suffice. The objective which confronts the church is colossal. The sums needed for education, for missions, for relief, for establishing new churches, for the sustentation of retired ministers, for the inculcation of sane notions of civil government rise into the millions and the billions. And far-sighted leaders are asking for vast sums, not with hesitation or doubt, but with the full assurance that the American heart and the American purse will furnish what the work requires. Here again the war has been our teacher. We have asked and obtained millions for the starving in lands that were overrun by the foe. So we raised millions more for the Salvation Army, the Knights of Columbus and the Young Men's Christian Association. And then we raised millions and billions for the successive

Liberty Loans. Never before in the world was money contributed in such enormous amounts or collected with such marvelous ease. And the bulk of it came from the purse of the people. It was announced that there were fifteen million individual subscribers for the last Victory Loan. So it is not to be doubted that the funds which the church is asking for will be supplied. It is needful only to employ the same tact, energy, and team work in the Lord's service that we gave to the secular drives to have the Lord's treasury filled to overflowing.

The victory offers to the church a most encouraging prospect. The war has provided a wonderful preparation of the field. Such plowing, such harrowing, such stump-pulling by wholesale has not been known before in the modern world. Allusion has been made to the astonishing changes that have befallen the nations. All through Europe, not merely in the lands that were dominated by the Central Powers, but everywhere, there has been awakening. The people everywhere are coming to their own. Under the monarchical system they were crushed to the earth. We know, however, that in Christ we had the true teacher of democracy, and we know also that the entire monarchical system was opposed to the principle of brotherhood and equality before the law that proceeds from the Christian idea, when properly interpreted. Now the multitudes who have lost their kings and their kinglets stand dazed as if they had been born suddenly into a new world. They have been born into a new world. The brightness of the new day dazzles their eyes,

and the mass of novel ideas confuses their understanding. It is at this critical juncture that all these peoples should be instructed wisely and tactfully. They need to have the real Christ interpreted to them, and the time for the work is not a thousand years off, but here and now. If they are neglected now, they stand in grave peril of being victimized by unholy teachers and corrupted by seditious and anti-Christian notions, which might result in their being so misled as to become enemies of a true church and a Christian state.

To help in our new world work we have prospective forces right to our hand. We had two million men in France and two million more in camps here at home. We have been asking what effect camp and army life has had upon these four million of our young men. Now it is commonly conceded that they have been profited immensely in their physical life by their training and their regularity of living. They have gained in carriage, in poise, and in self-control. Any person who remembers any particular detachment as it first went into camp, and compares the bearing of the same detachment as it came marching home with the former memory, will have seen the marked improvement. But besides they have profited intellectually. Their trip abroad has been an education in itself, but beside that many of the men have been enrolled in the soldier's schools, where they have had instruction under the ablest teachers. But still more, it is reported that these young men have gained much in spiritual perception and in religious devotion. We have more than mere rumor for this last statement, for a careful

survey of a leading camp affords us actual questions and answers given by the men themselves. In those answers the men declare that they have been improving, and seventy-five per cent. state that the army life has improved their morals, and seventy per cent. state that their religious life has been deepened and confirmed. When these men return to their home churches they will bring a fresh inspiration, and from among them it is to be hoped that we shall obtain valuable recruits for the Lord's army, both for the home field and for the work in other lands.

So we are warranted in welcoming the new day, and from the victories already registered for the world's peace and prosperity, we may move forward to greater victories for the kingdom and the name of the blessed Immanuel.

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